Campione! Volume 4

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These are novel illustrations that were included in "Campione! Volume 4".

カンピオーネ！
Campione Ⅳ
英雄と王

丈月城
Illustration シコルスキー

た 9-4

カンピオーネ！ Ⅳ 英雄と王

丈月城

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定価 本体600円＋税

草薙護堂は神殺しである。

草薙護堂（くさなぎごどう）は限界を迎えていた。自らを取り巻く少女たちとの生活に心労を重ねる護堂は、逃亡を決意する。だが、そこに現れたのは戦女神・アテナ。今ここに神と神殺しの呉越同舟（ごえつどうしゅう）がなる!? 一方、エリカと並び称される魔女・リリアナは剣の王（カンピオーネ）・サルバトーレとともに竜の誕生に遭遇する。そしてそれは新たな神の顕現（けんげん）をも意味していた!!

「我が主よ――お願いがあります。
……キスして、ください」

神と神殺しが出会うとき、新たな戦いの幕が開く！
絶好調ミスティックファンタジー!! 定価630円 本体600円

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7月の新刊・好評発売中！

丈月 城 イラスト／シコルスキー カンピオーネ！ Ⅳ 英雄と王

山形石雄 イラスト／前嶋重機 戦う司書と絶望の魔王

アサウラ イラスト／柴乃櫂人 ベン・トー 4 花火ちらし寿司305円

本田 透 イラスト／相音うしお がく×ぶる 3

あすか正太 イラスト／天広直人 初恋マジカルブリッツ わたし、きもち、愛、すべて！

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- カンピオーネ！ III はじまりの物語
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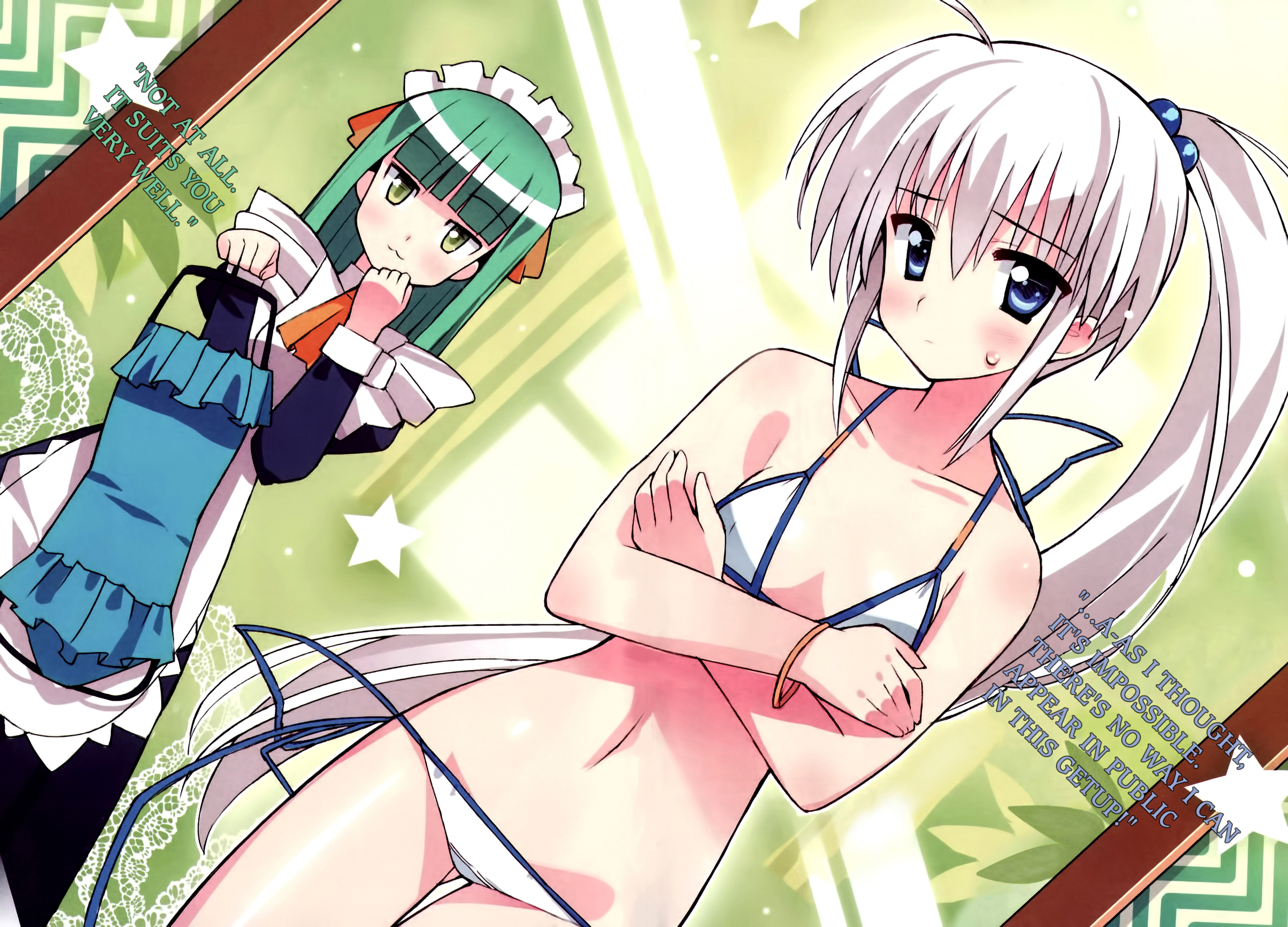
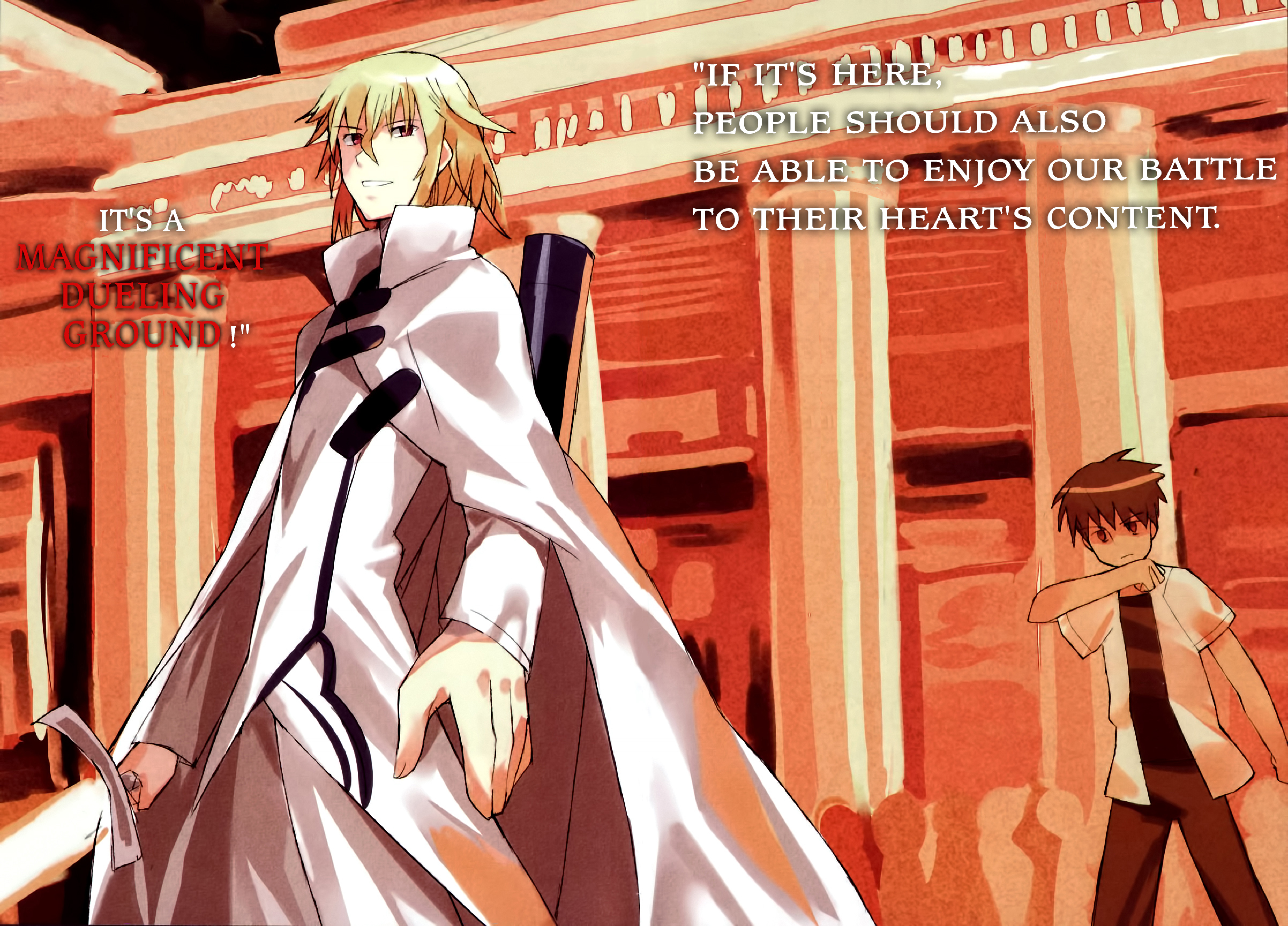

"...A-AS I THOUGHT, IT'S IMPOSSIBLE. THERE'S NO WAY I CAN APPEAR IN PUBLIC IN THIS GETUP!"
"NOT AT ALL. IT SUITS YOU VERY WELL."


"IF IT'S HERE, PEOPLE SHOULD ALSO BE ABLE TO ENJOY OUR BATTLE TO THEIR HEART'S CONTENT.
IT'S A MAGNIFICENT DUELING GROUND!"

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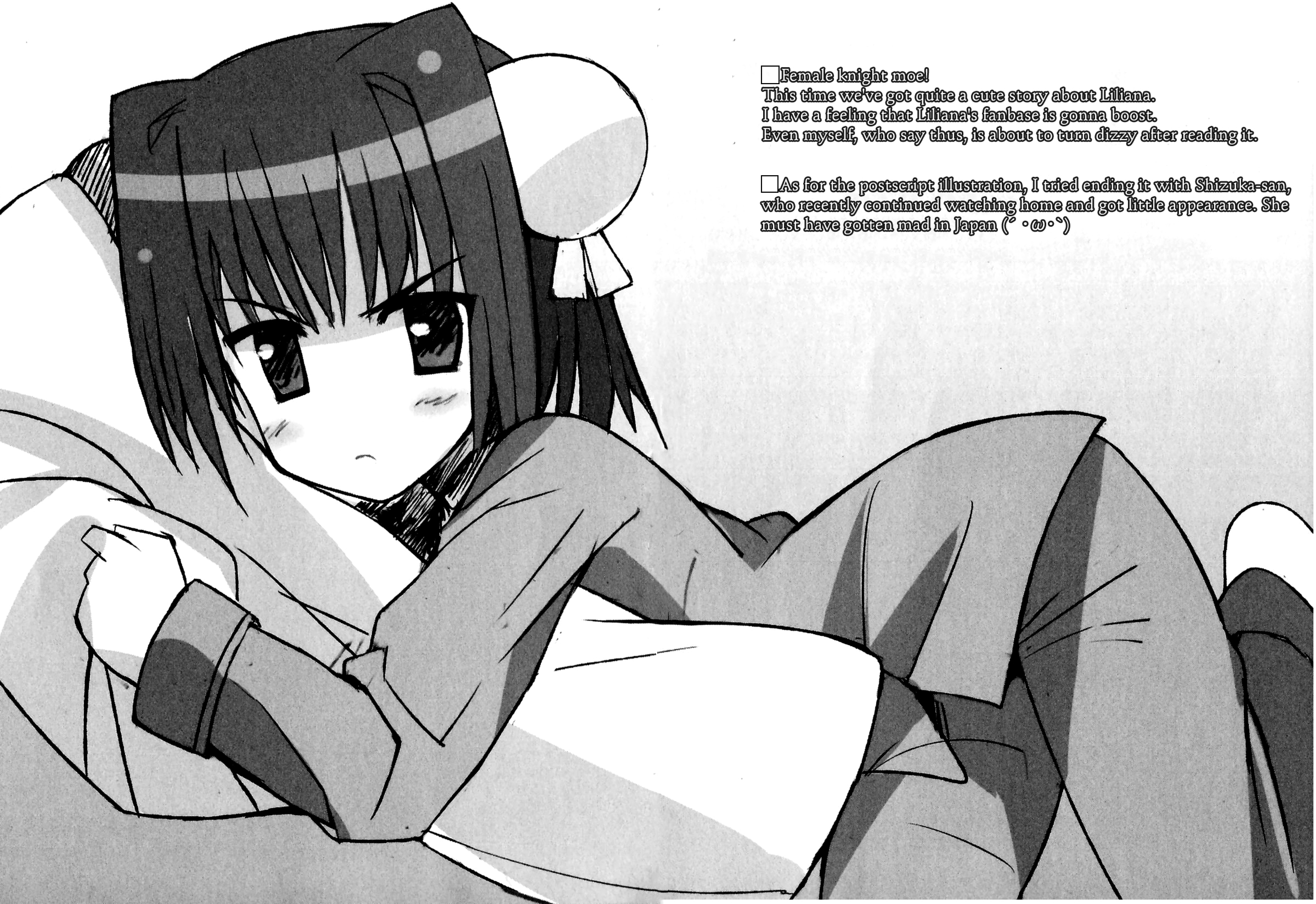
丈月城

Illustration
シコルスキー

カンピオーネ！

英雄と王

Campione Ⅳ



□Female knight moe!
This time we've got quite a cute story about Liliana.
I have a feeling that Liliana's fanbase is gonna boost.
Even myself, who say thus, is about to turn dizzy after reading it.

□As for the postscript illustration, I tried ending it with Shizuka-san, who recently continued watching home and got little appearance. She must have gotten mad in Japan (´ •ω•`)

Prologue

【Excerpt From the Meeting Minutes with Associated Individuals, Written by the Traveling Archeologist Sherilyn from London, Beginning of the 21st Century

Dragons have nine similarities.

Heads like a camel, horns like a deer, eyes like a ghost, ears like a bull, appearances like a snake, bellies like a mirage, scales like a carp, claws like an eagle, palms like a tiger.

Such is the [Dragon]'s appearance as written in Chinese books.

But it was merely a fantastical description written in text, combining various creatures to form a strange biological existence.

At the same time, the dragon's greatest similarity was its considerable semblance to snakes.

Whether it was eastern or western, dragons always had a thin, snake-like body, and at the same time exhibited characteristics of other beasts special to the region; therefore it always looked different given variations in location and time. The greatest unchanging aspect of this beast was that it always had its foundation as a [Serpent], which, regardless of region, has not differed since ancient times.

【Notes of the Witch Lucretia Zola, Regarding the Mythology of Perseus and Andromeda[1]

The monster perched by the waterside (likely a great serpent or dragon-kin) required them to present a girl as sacrifice.

At this moment, the timely appearance of a hero defeated the monster; he then took the rescued girl as his wife.

We have confirmed that even in the far-eastern Japan, there were also stories like that of Perseus and Andromeda. The most renowned examples would be the tales surrounding the Yamata no Orochi.[2]

Susanoo defeated the Yamata no Orochi before marrying Kushinada.[3]

Then from the tail of the slain serpent, he was granted the blessing of a divine sword.[4]

Therefore, Susanoo acquired the [Sword] from the body of the [Serpent].

There were several similarities to the formula that we European witches are familiar with.

For example, Siegfried who became immortal after killing the dragon Fafnir,[5] or the knight Sir Lancelot who received the magic sword from the faerie of the lake.[6]

In other words—confronting dragons was the hidden symbiotic relationship between heroes of steel and the gods of the earth and water.

【Liliana Kranjcar, about to go on vacation, just before meeting the [King]

It was already late July and about to change months.

Europe was in the middle of summer, the season of long vacations.

Spending the long vacation in either resorts that avoid the summer heat or coastal locations was good; renting a villa to spend leisure time was alright as well, even relaxing at one's own home from morning to night was not a bad call.

So for Liliana Kranjcar to assess her own swimsuit in front of the mirror in her room, it was not something others should gossip about.

Because it should be like that.

"...No, no this isn't good either, how can I wear something like this in front of everyone!"

Liliana was looking at herself in the mirror, frankly pointing out that it was impossible for her to dress like that.

The long vacation was scheduled to be spent by the sea this year . Therefore, she was now trying out the new swimsuit now. But...

What was wrapped around her slender body were the upper and lower portions of a bikini.

Although her body was very slender, the lush and delicate chest , as well as the feminine waistline, were both very soft, while her slim legs were like fine glass, all of it giving a fairy-like cuteness and the dangerously-balanced charm of a girl.

Liliana looked despairingly at her posture.

—Definitely not! This is way too exposed! Way too vulgar!

Liliana's white skin tone overwhelmed the blue lines of the swimsuit that was covering her.

It was way too daring.

Even though it fit perfectly, it was still problematic.

Although such an appearance may create some opportunities for her, things that could not be done just could not be done.

......The blistering summer sun, the scorching hot beach.

......At this time, the shy Liliana strolled in her swimsuit, watched by a gentleman (definitely a handsome guy, clad in swimwear, with the tanned skin of an athlete) who could not keep his eyes off her.

......The shy Liliana occasionally made eye contact, but the guy sent an elegant smile her way. She thought it would finish with just that, but the two of them met again several hours later.......

"J-just what am I thinking, really...... compared to this, Karen!"

"What are your orders, Liliana-sama? Does that swimsuit still meet your wishes?"

As Liliana addressed the exclusive maid who stood behind her, the other replied in a calm steady voice.

Karen Jankulovski.

A petite and cute girl who was wearing a maid outfit.

At age fourteen, she was at an age when studying should be her focus.

But, Karen was currently an apprentice sorceress studying at the Kranjcar family's [Bronze Black Cross] magic association. She already finished her high school courses, a result of constantly skipping grades while studying within the private school ran by the association.

Now she worked besides Liliana, receiving an education necessary for witches.

"It's rare to come here to shop, but I feel like this swimsuit doesn't fit me; seems way too showy."

"Not at all; I think it fits you perfectly."

"No! F-for a lady, just wearing such a thin swimsuit is already a problem!"

"Don't you often emphasize that you are a knight and not a lady ?"

"Eh, that is completely true, b-but what about as a girl! That's right, a pure girl shouldn't wear such shameless clothes."

Liliana declared in a high tone.

But Karen sighed with a tiny sound, and with gentle eyes that looked like she was dealing with a selfish child, she said:

"Really? Since Liliana-sama says that, there's also another swimsuit that I prepared...... but you might mind what others think of it."

Karen replied in a teasing tone.

Karen Jankulovski was not only an excellent witch, but also a capable maid, not to mention someone with an unforgiving tongue full of critique for others.

"Since it's a swimsuit, it's natural to be very thin; the fact that you mind such minor details also means that your tolerance is far too low...... ah, I'm really sorry, I accidentally spoke my mind, please forgive me."

Liliana could not help but frown as she heard these words that lacked the sincerity of an apology.

But, such a level of criticism was not enough to change her views.

"Then, what do you think of this swimsuit? I prepared it as a backup just in case. This is a blue one-piece swimsuit, completely lacking any cuteness; its simplicity and lack of sexiness is its only trait, a piece that completely lacks any sense of interest—"

"If you already prepared a plain swimsuit, then take it out in the first place."

As she watched, Karen pick up a swimsuit from the nearby table, Liliana relaxed and let out her breath at last.

But the calmly plotting maid purposefully made a worried expression.

"Well, I did prepare it, but when I heard that Erica Blandelli-sama's swimsuit this year was not only light and functional, but also a bikini that emphasized her boldness and sex appeal, I thought that if this continued, you won't even have a chance to compete against her......"

"......What did you say?"

Although Liliana wanted to pretend those words were just a passing wind, she was completely hooked after hearing the name of her rival.

"Karen...... how do you know what Erica's swimsuit will be like this year?"

"Do you know Arianna Arialdi? She's Erica-sama's maid and a long-time friend of mine; just yesterday on the phone we ended up chatting about this topic."

"You, when did you build such a relationship with that devil woman?"

"Please don't be surprised by something like this; this was only to grasp Liliana-sama's and our [Bronze Black Cross]' enemy—Erica-sama and her intentions."

The petite maid showed a calm and natural expression to her surprised mistress.

"Erica-sama and Liliana-sama are connected by an inexplicable fate, so it's likely that you'll meet her on some beach or at some swimming pool...... given that, I'm extremely worried about such a plain swimsuit; I'm not sure if it even has the right to compete with her."

"You are worrying over nothing; that fox woman is definitely staying in Japan, trying to beguile that seventh godslayer. I definitely will not meet her this summer.

Trying to use my rivalry with Erica to dress me up so shamefully? I will not let you succeed.

Hmph...... Liliana rejected Karen's suggestion with a cold smile.

"Ah, didn't you know? Erica-sama accompanied her lover—Kusanagi Godou-sama and arrived in Italy."

......Now she received some completely unexpected information.

Liliana fell silent and into deep thought; she had repeated her days of conflict with Erica Blandelli since childhood. Their martial arts shared the spotlight equally with neither side gaining any advantage, and while her magic was not as good as that woman in iron alchemy, she was still one-step better overall.

Then there were social skills, where Erica held an overwhelming advantage.

Just on this matter she was never as good; as a woman, her charm and her presence has always lost to Erica. She did not feel like her appearance or attitude lost in any way, then just why?

No...... I'm definitely somewhat blunt, and I don't really know how to talk......

But, that woman does not understand chores at all, especially when it comes to cooking, where she herself held an overwhelming advantage. Liliana Kranjcar could be counted as a homemaking type of woman after all.

"Then, we won't need the swimsuit you have on now, is that alright?"

The maid suddenly asked as she was pondering over things.

Liliana wanted to nod, but she hesitated. Was this alright? Was this really alright?

From a normal standpoint, without prior arrangements, her chances of meeting Erica on the beach were almost zero. But when she thought of her luck regarding that woman, going to a ten or even twenty percent chance from zero was possible......

"......No, let me carefully look over this again; this is actually alright. However please prepare the one piece for me as well, even though this year I'll wear the first one."

"Is that so? I understand."

Liliana pretended to be calm, while Karen coolly accepted the orders.

......Truthfully, as the head of the Kranjcar family, Liliana's grandfather was also worried about his granddaughter's lack of appeal, therefore he instructed Karen to "at least make her choose some more appropriate styles, but just how?", "Well Sir, please leave it to me.", "Oh~~ if successful, I'll reward you with a special bonus......" and similar dialogue, none of which was appropriate to the topic right now.

Nevertheless, the mistress and her exclusive maid finally came to a result, immediately followed by......

The ring tone sounded on Liliana's cell phone.

"Hello, I am Kranjcar...... yes, it has been a long time, Diana. Eh, Sir Salvatore? Yes, though I can get in touch with him...... Is there any reason to request his divine power? Unless some rare occasion has happened? The Heraion? The Seal of the Snake and the Cow!?"

After finishing her conversation, Liliana immediately opened her cell phone's contact list.

She called Italy's proud godslayer of the sword—Salvatore Doni .

To request his help, she had to reach him first.

At the same time, Liliana called the maid that stood beside her.

"Karen, my apologies, looks like this year's vacation is cancelled , right now we need to find Sir Salvatore, then immediately head towards Naples. Please make the travel arrangements.

"I understand, Liliana-sama."

This would drag Liliana Kranjcar into battle with the [Heretic Gods], and marked her prelude to new adventures.

Chapter 1 - In Search of Lost Time

Part 1

In a group that is comprised mainly of females, there is someone sticking out like a sore thumb. A single male.

If someone should think that they would be super happy or " This world is too perfect", then there is something seriously wrong with them.

Recently, Godou had started to have this kind of viewpoint upon his situation.

All in all, his shoulders felt very heavy, his mood was not good at all and he felt very uneasy.

Godou had no idea why he had to leave Japan and come all the way here to Sardinia, Italy for his summer vacation.

The layout of the island was similar to Shikoku (Japan), and was also famous for being a summer vacation tourist spot.

Because of the surrounding emerald-blue seas, it grew to fame as a tourist spot as celebrities frequently came here for vacations.

Originally, Godou and company had intended to stay on the area around the western coast.

As the airport was very close to Alghero, there were also many attractions nearby.

There were quite a few gothic, baroque and renaissance style buildings which served as world heritage sites.

Lastly, to trump everything else, the breathtakingly beautiful beaches and seas.

Except for the fact that it's slightly hotter than what would be comfortable, this would be the perfect vacation spot.

Even so, Godou's mood had not improved much.

And all of it was due to being surrounded by females. From the time he arrived until the current moment, four days have already passed. In this time, Godou had not even a day of peace.

For example, this morning—

In a room in the villa they had rented, after a refreshing wake-up, Godou had headed to the bathroom.

After brushing his teeth and washing his face, someone had sprung a surprise attack against him from the back.

Gagged, handcuffed and blindfolded, he was brought outside the villa and placed upon something like a rubber dinghy.

About twenty minutes had passed.

Taking the rubber dinghy to the sea, Godou was finally released from his bindings, and was given a ridiculous explanation.

"Finally, we can be alone together, Godou. I've been looking forward to this."

The voice expectedly came from Erica Blandelli.

Twirling her blond hair with her hands and giving off an expression of absolute happiness, Godou somehow felt like he was swooning, and began his retort.

"No way is this a situation where 'we can be alone together', isn't it more like a kidnapping?"

"That's not it... Because, it's all your fault that this happened."

Erica replied, still maintaining her immaculate smile.

In heaven and earth, I am the one and only, once said by Siddhārtha Gautama Buddha[7]. This young girl's actions had always seemed to be inspired from that phrase, hence Godou was already used to it.

"Whatever sins I have committed to deserve this fate, please tell me all about it. I would like to have a peaceful life in the future."

"Of course, it is the sin of not wanting us to be together alone."

Upon the first day of arrival, Godou had already been a victim of Erica's relentless and ferocious hugging.

After that, he had taken extreme caution not to be caught in a situation where he was alone with Erica.

Will I be able to return in one piece? Did the chicken or the egg come first? In order to prevent a tragedy and taking preventive measures, in the end it would still lead to the same tragedy. If whatever I do will result in the same ending, then isn't life just cruel and meaningless?

...Godou fell into deep thought, attempting to escape from reality via his random inner monologue.

The Erica who was naturally wearing a swimsuit temptingly gazed at Godou, her swimsuit revealing -a lot- of skin.

Their skin came in contact intimately, her face gradually getting closer and her mesmerizing lips slowly closed the distance.

Not good. To continue escaping reality would result in fatality. To be specific, it would not be strange for it to end in an engagement to Erica in three days.

Comparing their physical strength, combat would not be a viable option.

From her combat capability, Godou would already be hanging by a thread.

Even in a war of attrition, stamina would only be slowly chipped away. If that was the case, then he would entrust everything to that instance of battle.

The amorously approaching Erica had relaxed her guard, and it was at this moment that he took action.

"Ah, hold on a moment Godou! After coming this far with me, where are you planning on going?"

"Sorry, but I'm going to head back by myself. Don't follow me!"

Stripping off his shirt, he focused on the shore in the far distance amidst the rolling waves.

With all his might, he swam, not stopping even for a brief moment.

On the endless sea, he swam towards the shore which seemed like a mirage in the desert. Not just his body, even his spirit was suffering from this ordeal.

Finally, after what seemed like eternity, he finally managed to reach the rented villa.

Mariya Yuri and Lucretia Zola were waiting together for him.

"Godou-san, where on earth have you been this morning?"

Yuri asked while standing in front of the door.

Indeed, she gave off the feeling of a traditional Japanese-style girl, but her light-brown hair made her seem to be more than meets the eye. She was a prim and proper beautiful girl with a sense of transparency.

However, the eyes of the usually level-headed Yuri were very frightening at the moment.

Her eyes did not give off a feeling of undisguised danger, perhaps it was a more quiet and tranquil stare. Also, one could feel a strong will and a noble sense of obligation behind those eyes.

—Oh. Although I don't know why, somehow it seems that I have angered Yuri.

Godou sighed.

In these few months, he had come to know that this expression was a sign of danger. She was a girl that could be as gentle as Buddha, but also as fearsome as Yasha.

At the same time, he looked at the witch under the eaves, who was swaying on the rocking chair.

"Hoho, once, some Japanese female university students on vacation drew graffiti on the San Pietro Cathedral. Unintentionally , I flew into a rage. Now, I'm regretting it... What sad, deplorable behavior they showed me..."

Said Lucretia Zola, who was randomly spouting off various stories.

The beautiful witch with flaxen-colored hair and a body that mere words could not do justice to, did not even glance over at Godou and Yuri even once. Suspicious.

Based on that, should anything disastrous occur, most likely it would have something to do with her.

"Godou-san, where exactly have you been to? Please face me, and listen to me properly. That is only basic courtesy."

"Ah, sorry... Erm Mariya, is it ok if I ask what you are angry about?"

"I am not angry. Merely shocked. I came to understand that Godou-san, although always speaking seriously, is in actual fact an impure person who knows no shame, and thus I feel disappointed. "

Although I had asked in such a nice and polite manner, such was the reply I had received.

The degree of scariness in Yuri's eyes was increasingly steadily.

"I-It seems that you are misunderstanding something, what happened?"

"I am not misunderstanding anything at all. Earlier, I heard from Lucretia-san, that early this morning, Godou-san and Erica-san, had snuck out together alone... To, to accept that kind of tempting invitation from Erica-san who is always up to no good and not even resist, you were obediently brought outside..."

"No, it is because I was fully handcuffed, blinded and gagged that I could not resist, there is no way I would have gone along willingly with that girl. Don't misunderstand this!"

After listening to Godou's explanation, Yuri could only give a pained smile.

What does she mean by that expression? It was as though she was mourning someone who had done something so utterly hopeless, like a complete idiot, as though she was doubting how he would turn out in the future, while revealing a Buddha-like expression.

"It is no surprise to me that you refuse to tell the truth. It is just as Lucretia-san had said, it is times like these that men will continue to lie and dig their own graves... I was mistaken in judging your character, how filthy."

Mariya Yuri is a very smart, deep-thinking girl.

As she was raised as a ojou-sama, she had a very gullible side to her. Not knowing the lies and trickeries of the world, she was very pure-hearted.

"M-Mariya. Although I don't know what she told you, don't just believe in anything. Please believe me!"

"A man caught with his pants down will always say things like "Please believe me", really, it is in no way convincing—Exactly like what Lucretia-san had said."

That damn witch, what nonsense exactly did she feed her?

Godou, stared menacingly at Lucretia, whose face was currently covered by a newspaper.

"Hoho, the Italian Prime Minister has been denying rumors about his having of a hair transplantation surgery. He claims that it is a change in lifestyle that resulted in the unnatural sudden spurt of hair growth. Hoho, what a load of crap."

"Please don't badmouth people behind their backs, when you are also guilty of the same thing. Why have you been telling Mariya a load of nonsense?"

"Telling her a load of nonsense, that's surprising, I don't remember doing that. Boy, it's not good to get lost in wild delusions."

Lucretia replied, finally putting down the newspaper that covered her face.

"I merely taught her a brief lesson on biology and social psychology. First, about the stamen and pistil and their roles in fertilization. After that, about how in recent times, young males and females would fall into the depths of their youth, resulting in a certain ending which would greatly affect their daily lives. And then, due to their own muddiness and dishonesty, what kind of excuses men will employ to cover up their mistakes. This morning, I only imparted these few basic understandings of humans to her, that's all!"

As she was saying that, she puffed out her chest as though it perfectly explained her actions.

Lucretia Zola, the witch, was their host at this island of Sardinia.

According to his personal experience, and proof from various situations, she was at least about six to seven decades old.

However, from what the eyes could see, she was a flawlessly beautiful lady in her late twenties.

Underneath that, she was an advocate of 'fun above everything'. To her, having fun was the single most important factor in any decision.

In the end, Godou had to spend an hour to explain to Yuri that he was innocent. After all that, she still regarded him with a slightly suspicious look. Not just that, she also mentioned something like, 'Since you have gone to such great lengths to explain yourself, I will trust you just this once. Please do not betray my expectations of you'. Godou totally had no idea what she was so hurt about.

It was as though she were a young wife who knew her husband was cheating on her, yet still endured with pure willpower.

Mariya Yuri is a miko who possessed something like clairvoyance, known as "Reishi" (Spirit Vision).

Although she could see what cannot be seen, know what cannot be known, she could not use this power as she willed. At times, it was a really reproachful ability.

At any rate, to Godou, who had barely managed to make it back safely, he had already met another crisis.

"Ara, Godou-san. Where have you been? Please hold on a moment, lunch is almost ready."

Came a voice from the kitchen, from a girl who was busy working in the kitchen while humming a tune.

Arianna Hayama Arialdi.

She had a Japanese grandfather, and is currently working under Erica as a maid.

Lively, kind, serious and with a refreshing appearance. A gentle person who wouldn't harm a fly; that was how good the impression Godou had of her.

But this time, Godou felt a sudden chill run down his spine.

Anna, as she was more commonly called, was adding some zucchini, and unknown shellfish-like things, among others, into the boiling soup. Her stew was extremely dangerous. A few days earlier, Arianna had created this soup known as 'The refreshing taste of summer', which had a taste and appearance that words cannot possibly describe.

Erica and Lucretia did not even try to taste a single bit.

Yuri tried her very best, but could only manage to finish half of it.

In the end, it was left to Godou to dispose of it. The leftovers were fed to the stray cats. Well, to be exact, the cats had run away the moment they smelled the concoction.

Thus, Godou, ignoring his current fatigue from long-distance swimming, made a request.

"Anna-san, you are always the one who makes all our meals. As I kind of feel bad over it, please leave lunch's preparations to me."

"I can't do that, please, you don't have to be so kind to me. After all, I do love cooking."

"No, please let me do it by all means! Leave it to me!"

Just like that, Godou had forcibly taken on the responsibility of making lunch.

Afterwards, Godou, Yuri, Arianna, Lucretia and Erica who had just returned, started to enjoy the lunch that was prepared together .

"Such a bland, sketchy taste. Also, the ingredients are not beautifully cut."

Said the gourmet Erica, who was sitting in the opposite direction, facing Godou.

Surprisingly, to the Erica who would eat anything, she would pick the portions of better quality whenever she had the chance.

Because of that, Godou did not prepare any frozen foodstuffs (Even in countries that favored the slow food culture, would also sometimes make use of frozen foodstuffs as ingredients). Really, people as extravagant as Erica do exist.

"This must be because the chef did not have enough love. Clearly, even though we love each other mutually, he only ever runs away... The moment I let down my guard, he runs straight to another woman."

"It can't be helped, that is just how men are."

Of course, the one who replied with such profound, unfathomable truths, was no other than Lucretia.

Directly opposite her, the person silently listening with a serious expression, Yuri.

No, what this old witch said was definitely wrong, hopefully Yuri won't take her seriously.

"A hooked fish is too valuable to be used as bait. Isn't it a very thoughtless way of doing things? Even as a joke, it is a behavior ill-suited for the man who possesses the title of 'King'. Oops, sorry. This is just the general opinion, by no means am I referring to nor criticizing any particular individual." [8]

As she said that, Lucretia nudged the shoulders of Godou, who was sitting at her side.

She is doing this on purpose to infuriate me, isn't she?!

"Yes, however, even though that is the general opinion, it is not always true. Overly enthusiastic pursuits result in a lot of problems, but, if you can properly manage the relationships with your women, yourself and others, that could also be considered as a form of forbearance... If possible, please let me go in depth as to how Caesar was able to maintain his relationships with many women."

"That's right, this would be useful for Godou to know. All for the sake of his future."

"What kind of 'future' are you talking about?!"

Godou shouted, at Lucretia and Erica, who were saying whatever they pleased.

Pressured to this extent, Godou's voice was loud enough to surprise even himself.

"No need for your lessons, also, don't say it like I'm someone from the Genji Era!"

"Ah, an exiled, shameful noble who spends every day wallowing in sorrow? Living such a life, not forgetting the lovers you had once brought back to the capital, such a lustful person... Ah, though to be honest, your life is pretty similar to him, boy." [9]

"Ara, Lucretia, although I am allowing Godou to increase the size of his harem, he probably already has six to seven wives and mistresses? As expected, it is a bit too much."

"Please don't use such an expression from such a famous Japanese literature to describe it! Godou-san, this is your fault! Because you are always doing things that invite such misunderstandings..."

Aaah, what a mess.

Just listening to them made Godou extremely exhausted. What went in from the right ear, goes straight out the left ear.

Kusanagi Godou had to endure events like this for four days straight. He felt like he had almost reached his limits.

Aaah, I want to escape from this.

Part 2

Indeed, living together with just girls is, simply put, torturous.

Finally, he made it to the fourth evening of the vacation. In his room in the villa, he had come to that conclusion. He should have become used to this lifestyle by now, yet things had not quite gone the way he wanted. Godou could not think of any other reasons why this was the case.

Godou, who played baseball from his childhood, had often participated in group activities like camps and such.

While in the junior league and when he was a senior, the team would often go overseas together to practice. In groups of large numbers, usually over ten boys, they would always take care of their own respective laundry and meals.

Godou had even experienced the hardball baseball Tokyo trials, or, even better, the national trials to represent the nation at international events.

Participating in such events meant Godou had quite a fair bit of experience lodging together with many others. Because of this, he was quite used to living together with his fellow competitors, in an atmosphere filled with tension. However, compared to those times , this was much, much worse.

With just guys, he didn't really need to care much about anything. There was also no need to be mindful about anything in particular, either. Furthermore, he wouldn't be in this much trouble.

Which is why, it is all because of the fact that they were all females that the current situation was so dire. Definitely not because of their personalities, nor conduct, nor glaring problems with their common sense or anything like that.

—A case of sour grapes.

Godou couldn't help but think of this saying. Perhaps there were lucky men out there living their lives surrounded by only kind, gentle girls... Although from his point of view, it seemed like an impossible scenario.

Thinking that, he looked around the room again.

A room in the rented villa.

On the girls' side, Erica and Arianna shared a room, Yuri and Lucretia shared another.

He stayed in this room alone. He insisted on it, after all, while they were allocating the rooms. Such a snug and cozy place.

"... Well, getting past this lock won't even be enough to make Erica break a sweat."

Very confident in his prediction, his shoulders fell again.

Someone that could stop the [Diavolo Rosso] from running wild did not exist here.

Yuri, whom, theoretically could do so, turned out to be unexpectedly easy to counter. Previously, she could control her emotions so well, yet nowadays she seemed to regard Erica with an air of malice.

Arianna would not be able to oppose her master in any way. As for Lucretia, she would only make things worse.

However, Kusanagi Godou would not give up because of this. After all, being persistent was part of his nature.

"As expected, it is necessary to carry out *that* plan, huh..."

Taking care not to make a single sound, he snuck out the room.

Maintaining the level of stealth, he continued on his way out of the villa.

The sun had set some time ago, and it was pitch black.

European nights were surprisingly darker than those in Japan. Although, with Godou's sharp night vision, this was not a big problem.

In the night, after walking on the road for roughly ten minutes, he reached the entrance of a small grocery store.

In Italy, convenience stores were a rarity. This was a shop that stocked only groceries and basic necessities, but now the doors were tightly shut. However, as Godou's aim was not to buy something, it didn't matter.

His goal was the public payphone in front of the store.

Inserting a coin, he called the number that he had obtained from Erica earlier.

(What is it, Godou? Do you need something from that vulgar man?)

(I remembered that he requested that I do something for him. I'm counting on you.)

After nagging Erica who refused to give in for three hours, he finally managed to get an answer out of her.

Now, the person who is about to be contacted, was one of the rumored few in the world that Erica Blandelli outwardly disliked. Still, he was someone that Godou got along well with. Someone to make use of, in this situation.

"... ... Oi, who are you? I'll say this first, I'm currently very busy. Get straight to the point."

"It's me, Kusanagi Godou!"

Through the phone, came a rough voice that he had not heard for a while.

Instinctively, a picture of the owner of the voice came to mind. The appearance of Genaro Gantz.

He was not particularly tall, yet he was very powerfully built.

Also, he had a very manly beard.[10] He had a sharp look in his eyes, and he wore a serious expression.

On his head he wore a bandanna, anyone who saw him would have thought he looked just like a pirate.

However, in the [Copper Black Cross], he was Erica's equal.

Among the Templar Knights, he bore one of the titles that held the greatest honor, that of the [Great Knight]. It is certainly an impressive feat to accomplish at the age of twenty-three, but even more impressive than that was the fact that he already had a one-year-old child with his wife.

"Ooh, it's you, 'King', eh? It's been a while."

"Yes, it's me. By the way, Gantz-san, I came to Italy a few days ago..."

"You should have told me that you were coming beforehand, I would have been there to welcome you."

He said something that made Godou a little happy.

Though he appeared to be coarse and rough on the outside, he was quite a good-natured person on the inside.

Although his actions were far from graceful due to his hot-bloodedness and he was greatly disliked by Erica, he could be described as someone who had good intentions.

...Well, it's not that he doesn't have any faults.

"By the way, Your Majesty, have you properly finished the ' assignment'?" he rudely asked Godou out of the blue.

People involved with the affairs of the magical or occult usually treat Godou with a lot of respect, due to his Campione status.

Gantz is one of the few that did not do so.

His relationships with others was more, casual, so to speak. Godou was rather pleased with this aspect of his personality, but however, during these specific times he couldn't let it slide.

"N-no. I've been busy with various things, I haven't done it yet."

"What!? Idiot, haven't I told you many times before? If you're a true Japanese, you have to hurry up and finish all four seasons, two hundred episodes of 'Magical Sorami'!!" [11]

"... ... Sorry."

Godou had seen that coming.

Because of how troublesome it would be, Godou did not bother to get Gantz's contact information before his attempted get-away vacation.

Godou sighed to himself, at a volume low enough that the other party would not be able to hear.

"Sheesh. I've even said this before, although they transform into witches through magical cosmetics, and are still in training, the girls from 'Magical Sorami' still managed to win the hearts and smiles of people around them. Understand this, real magic comes from 'courage' and 'kindness'! That is what I've learned from that show!"

Even though he was a bona fide mage, he still said that with such gusto.

Godou did not dare to say out his true feelings.

Although 'Magical Sorami' was a show that had already ended ages ago, Godou had no idea why it was still so popular in foreign countries (It seems like it has been repeatedly broadcast in Italy several times).

The first time that he tried watching the DVD that he borrowed, he got rapped pretty hard by his sister Shizuka, and had gotten a condescending look from her.

... ... If Gantz didn't have this weird fetish, he would have been a great person to hang out with.

Godou felt regret, but he had to push away his true feelings due to the things he had to say this time.

"Never mind then. I'll just have to invite you to my place and hold a movie marathon. If we pull an all-nighter, we'll probably finish the first season by the second day."

"I see. I don't really mind. Alright then, I'll go straight to Milan!"

Godou did not want to stay in this place for even a moment longer.

Having made up his mind to escape from this hellish place, he had no choice but to resort to this call. Although he did not know if he could stay at Gantz's place temporarily, before he knew it, he was already invited.

It's going rather smoothly. Godou felt as though he still had a fighting chance, and his spirits soared with the surge of motivation .

Watching a show that was targeted at little girls under the age of ten; that would still be better than what Godou had been going through.

However, problems immediately started to arise.

"...Ah, hold on a moment. Actually, it's a no-go. Definitely not now."

"Eh!? W-Why is that?"

"In any case, you won't be coming alone, right? That little devil—Erica Blandelli—would come along with you, right?"

"Eh, seems like it..."

"That's how it is. If I invite you, that woman will definitely force her way into my house! I'm very sorry about that! Right now, my cute little Angela is at home!"

Angela is the name of Gantz's daughter.

Godou had seen her picture before, or at least, was forced to look at it by Gantz. However, that is irrelevant at the moment.

"If she breathes the same air as that ill-natured woman, should Angela grow up to be like that devil, that would be a big problem. For the sake of my daughter's education, there is no way I'll let Erica come near my house!"

"Please don't say things that have no scientific basis!"

"Just in case. For the sake of my cute little angel, I won't let any pests come near. Don't hold it against me. Then, let's meet up another time."

With that, he hung up.

Godou, who was suddenly cast aside, had a sudden urge to use the power he held as a 'King'. As a devil king, a Campione, to make Gantz take back his previous words.

But he changed his mind right away. No, if he thought like that, wouldn't he turn into a devil himself?

He should not abuse his status like that. Although, a devil king asking someone, 'Let me go to your house to watch some anime DVDs' was totally unheard of. What a laughingstock.

"... ... Back to square one. I'll have to continue this fight on my own."

Said Godou, who had just renewed his determination, in a low voice.

No matter what, I cannot return to the villa tonight. I should find a place to stay the night, far from the women, in order to recover. The temperature was pretty warm, thus there was no problem even if he were to sleep on the streets.

... ... Although right now, he was trapped with indecision, clueless about how to proceed.

No matter, Godou decided to just explore the street first, and come up with something later.

Godou was thankful for the cool night breeze, so drastically different from the blazing heat of the day. Of course, it was even more comfortable in his room in the villa, but taking a stroll in the night was also good, in its own way.

The night wind continued to blow ever so gently.

To be able to see the constellations in the night sky so clearly, was only possible in a rural place with clean air.

Additionally, the shimmering silver half-moon hanging in the middle of the sky.

Unlike the constellations, the same moon could be seen from Europe and Japan. It was like the eternal companion in the night sky, Godou remembered that he also had times in Japan where he gazed at the moon like this. 'When was the last time?' he wondered .

While reminiscing, Godou continued moving forward.

He was not sure when it happened, but the muscles in his back had started to grow tense, his limbs and body filling with strength.

Since defeating Verethragna in spring, he had experienced this feeling a number of times. The changes that occur in the body of a devil king, a Campione, when their natural enemies, the Gods, are nearby.

When he felt that, Godou gulped.

He had realized who the girl currently blocking his way was.

—Looking as though it could dissolve in the moonlight, hair of pale glimmering silver.

—Looking as though they were made of the condensed darkness of the night, eyes of pure black.

—The body of a very young girl, a goddess from ancient times.

Heretic Athena.

The goddess Godou fought and triumphed over in Tokyo, was standing right in front of him.

Part 3

"It's been a while, Kusanagi Godou. To meet once again, I feel a sense of elation."

Athena said, giving off a faint smile.

The sealed artifact of the ancient earth goddess, Gorgoneion.

The smile she gave off did not suit her, who had once again become the goddess of earth and darkness, after reclaiming the artifact Gorgoneion. No, this was the fearless smile of the goddess of war.

"... ... Why are you here, in such a place?"

"What a foolish question. You were the one who plunged right into my territory. To meet again in this land, it is an inevitable fate. Don't you agree?"

Putting it that way, that sure seems like the case.

This great goddess, Athena, her sphere of influence did not include just Greece and North Africa, but also small parts of Asia close to the Mediterranean sea. And Italy was right smack in the middle of that sphere of influence.

"But, you have no reason to come specifically to where I'm currently staying, right? Let me make this clear, I wasn't looking for you. Nor do I have time to chat with you like we're good friends."

"Hmm... A reason..."

Under the moonlight, the ends of her lovely lips tilted slightly upwards.

Beautiful, dignified, yet ferocious was her smile. Overflowing with the will to fight, the unmistakable proof of a warrior.

"You are a man of poor judgment. All I am doing now is paying a visit to the victor, the one who had defeated me. Do not think that this is for the sake of revenge."

It was not that Godou did not think that was possible, but rather that he did not want to think this was actually happening.

He had started to break out in cold sweat.

Would he come out victorious if he were to face Athena in combat? Probably impossible.

In the previous battle, he had only come out on top because he had used the spell words of the [Sword] as his weapon. However, he could not repeat that again. The [Sword] could only be used if the user had relevant information of the enemy God, something he was lacking at the moment.

More than two months back, Godou had been fed information on Athena via use of the magic [Instruction] by Erica.

Should one decide to make use of this magical art, it is possible to obtain a large amount of information over a very brief period of time. However, the information could only be retained in one's memory for roughly one day.

If the effects of the spell would remain indefinitely, there wouldn't have been a need to study this much.

Although he was usually grateful for the existence of this spell, this time—it would not be of use to him.

Even if he tried to recall the relevant knowledge regarding Athena, he could not clearly remember the details, his efforts ended in futility. This time round, he would not be able to use the [Sword].

What should I do? How can I fight?

I'll need a weapon besides the [Sword]. Which form can I use—?

"Besides having poor judgment, are you a man who's also poor at giving up? I do understand... that right now, you do not possess the same strength from last time. I can also guess why that is the case."

Athena said, scornfully.

Godou remembered that she was a goddess with multiple aspects.

A goddess who ruled over the earth and the underworld, a goddess of war and also a goddess of knowledge.

It would be difficult to hide anything from Athena. Although, even if she found out about that, it is not as if he had no other combat options... Though, this was slowly turning out to be a hopeless situation.

Looking at Godou who had started to steady his resolve, Athena pouted in displeasure.

"Come now, don't get angry. I have no intention of having a rematch... At least for today."

She declared while scrutinizing him with a disdainful look.

"Kusanagi Godou. From our last battle, it has barely been two full moons, has it not? In such a short period of time, to repeat the conflict between a god and a Campione, don't you agree that it would be boorish? If I had wanted a fight, then I would have picked a better place and time. Do understand your current situation."

"So, why have you appeared before me, again?"

Godou asked while keeping his guard up.

Her previous words might have just been to give him a false sense of security. A goddess like Athena should not have to resort to such tactics, but one could never be sure.

"Hm, I feel that, between us, something exists that interlinks our destinies—In other words, it might be that it is not fated for me to be the one that defeats you."

That kind of destiny, I definitely don't want it.

Godou's terrible luck with women was definitely getting worse.

"That's why, as one of my enemies, I would like you to acquire enough power and experience, was what I was thinking about. One day, you will obtain the right to do battle with me—the queen who rules over the earth and the underworld. When that happens, it would be time for the grand finale, a battle that will be told of for ages."

"No, no thanks, things like 'looking forward to having a decisive battle on Christmas', I don't want to hear it."

"To be honest, recently I have been feeling awfully excited rather often."

Athena replied, nonchalantly ignoring Godou's retort. As expected of a high-ranking goddess, such perfectly natural arrogance.

"Perhaps it is due to the fact that I am sensing that a battle is approaching. When I knew that you came here, I simply felt like coming out to have a little bit of fun."

"A little fun?"

"Indeed. The experience gained from one day on the battlefield exceeds that of a hundred days in training. Not to mention, if one were to fight beside me, a goddess of war, and receive my teachings, it would surpass that of what you would get from a thousand days of training. To train and further improve your strength. Accompany me while I have some fun, Kusanagi Godou! "

"C-Come again?"

Hearing that from Athena, Godou thought that his ears were malfunctioning.

"I am ordering the inexperienced you to stay by my side and train your skills. Should you find that disagreeable, then I will secure a rope around that neck of yours and bring you around. Any objections?"

Naturally, it has already been decided. He did not have a say in it.

From Athena's body of a little girl, one could somehow feel a divine power of deterrence. Looking over all life across the lands, the power of the loving earth mother. Beneath the earth, she was the queen of the underworld, the power that ruled death and darkness. Possessing unparalleled ferocity, the power of a war goddess. Lastly, the power from the wisdom of a goddess of knowledge.

To carelessly engage in combat with such a goddess would be extremely foolish. It would be best to avoid that at all costs.

—Due to various reasons, Kusanagi Godou was accompanying a goddess on her journey.

On an unrelated note, the villa that Godou and company had rented and were staying in was along the coast.

Moving along the outskirts of Alghero's main street which was along the sea, one could discover many villas, resorts and other buildings that tourists on long summer vacations were lodging in. Her house, was one of those buildings.

Alongside the azure sea, the white sands stretched out further than the eyes could see.

In this kind of location, one would be able to fully enjoy just soaking in the seawater, but, recreation and entertainment on the beaches of Sardinia was not restricted to just that.

Yachts of different sizes decorated the seaside. Some were fighting against the forces of nature, the waves—

There were also boats and ships at the harbor. Although in the area, the biggest port was in Alghero, there were quite a few smaller ports scattered along the coast.

The place that Athena and Godou finally arrived at was one of the small aforementioned ports.

"Now, let us move out, shall we, Kusanagi Godou?"

"... where are we headed?"

"Although I mentioned this earlier, but I have been feeling unusually excited recently. Being a goddess of war, it might be because I'm sensing the approaching battle ahead. To have this feeling, I dare say that something is going to occur very soon."

"Eh—"

"If we were to head towards the root of that calamity, we would then gain a rough understanding of the situation. Let us cross this sea. To the unseen enemy, shall we advance..."

"Is that so..."

"Therefore, that is our destination. Let us make haste."

"Wait a second, isn't that place just weird? Don't bring me to a place where danger awaits, on purpose!"

Godou retorted.

General knowledge would dictate that the usage of the word ' therefore' was inappropriate in that sentence.

"You are the weird one, I can already see the omen of battle. Fate has decided for me to do battle, and it is my duty as a goddess to follow the will of fate. I cannot refuse."

She said that with a powerful sense of responsibility.

How he wished that she would even spare a tenth of that sense of responsibility for the people who will be caught up in that battle .

Sighing, having no other choice, Godou could only strengthen his determination.

No matter what happened, a battle would only bring problems to the nearby residents, like that incident in Tokyo. It was clear that the word 'consideration' did not exist in Athena's dictionary.

If that was the case, then all he could do was to prevent her from going too wild.

Although he really wanted to escape at the first opportunity he got, he was the only person around who could and would stop Athena from overdoing it.

"You mentioned crossing the sea earlier, by boat?"

Speaking of the Mediterranean Sea, he could not help but think of the ferries that travelled to and fro between Sardinia, Sicily, Corsica islands and the Italian peninsula. However, at this time of the day, there were no vessels moving about.

To Godou, who had sensed something amiss, Athena replied arrogantly,

"Can you not see the scores of boats before your eyes? Any of them will do, we just have to pick one to use, why do you care about the trivial things?"

"What you just said, those were the words of a petty thief! A goddess should not resort to crime!"

No doubt about it, this little port was filled with sea vessels.

From small crafts that could only support a group of four, to high-speed ships that were over fifteen meters long, Athena chose, and boarded a small one, beckoning to Godou.

Godou apologized in his heart to the owner of that boat.

If he had time, he would definitely return the boat. *Please forgive us!*

After that, Godou took a seat next to where Athena was sitting.

"... Do you know how to operate this type of boat? Gods sure have strange abilities."

"How would I know how to operate a man-made contraption? As long as I follow the guidance of the stars, the whispers of the wind, all I have to do is utilize my divine powers, and we will naturally arrive at our destination."

Saying that, Athena snapped her fingers.

By some unexplainable forces, she was moving the craft forward.

...Towards the sea ahead, which was shrouded in darkness.

She couldn't possibly be thinking of heading out to sea, just like that? Even if they were skilled seamen from the Age of Discovery, they should also bring the necessary provisions and equipment and the right crew, but now, they did not even have a scrap of food or a drop of water.

Godou had started to feel that this was a very, very bad idea.

Facing the possibility of death on the seas, unable to even lodge a complaint and leaving his life in the hands of this goddess, was it really ok? Thinking that, Godou began to grow even more uneasy.

At any rate, before he realized it, it had become a strange situation where this pair, once bitter enemies, were placed on the same boat.

Chapter 2 - Of Witches, and the King of Swords

Part 1

Naples (Napoli, in Italian) is one of the most prominent metropolises in Italy, and the harbor is a famous sightseeing spot.

The phrase "See Naples and die" was coined, from the sheer beauty of the ancient city.

Even when seen from afar, the view of the city was still as impressive.

The rays of sunlight fell upon the glimmering azure Bay of Naples, and on that stood one of the numerous historical structures, the Santa Lucia port.

It could be said that the night scenery there was among the three greatest in the world. If you were to look eastward, you would be able to see Mount Vesuvius, the volcano ten kilometers away.

"Hm, looking at it this far away, it looks like quite a beautiful town, but once you get close, you realize that the streets are dirty and strewn with rubbish, the walls are vandalized, there is constant traffic congestion, the people are happy-go-lucky, and daily life is simply chaotic. No matter how much you try to butter it up, it is still an environment unfit for human habitation."

"Ara, Karen, although you are absolutely right, that isn't something you should say to a resident of this city!"

"I apologize if my words offend you, Madam. Honesty and frankness are both part of my nature, hence I often let slip my true feelings by accident."

Known as Spaccanapoli, this was one of the older streets in Naples.

The center of the city, close by Garibaldi Square and the nearby cathedral was bustling with activity, overflowing with the friendly atmosphere of a traditional commercial and working-class neighborhood. In a decrepit corner of that lay Diana Milito's ancient bookstore.

"—M-Madam? Did you hear that, Lily? This little girl dared to call me 'Madam'... Say something for me!"

"Karen, when addressing a... young lady like Diana, shouldn't there be a better way?"

Naples, the birthplace of pizza, was also a university town.

It was in the year 1224, the era of the Syrian Kingdom, when the University of Naples was established. The university has lasted through the ages till the present times. Perhaps one of the reasons would be the environment, as there were a surprising number of old bookstores in the area.

There was a street next to Piazza Bellini that was well known for having many old bookstores.

In the building known as the 'House of Milito', the three witches had gathered there.

Somehow, no matter which country, one could feel the same sort of atmosphere in these ancient bookstores.

Within the cleanly designed store, were a collection of a myriad of old books, tomes and other texts, and it gave off a very peculiar atmosphere.

"When Liliana-sama is not being sincere, she will look elsewhere, and will not engage in eye contact... Like how she was earlier."

"What!? Lily, is that true...?"

"Not a single bit! Karen, don't say things without any basis or proof behind them!"

"Ara, weren't you rather concerned about that the other day? — Wondering about Diana-sama's actual age. Did you not say this last time, although she had dressed younger than her own age, she still could not conceal the crow's feet around the corner of her eyes ?"

"I didn't say that! Definitely not to that extent!"

"Now, now, you let the cat out of the bag, Lily. How cruel of you girls!"

The owner of the shop, Diana Milito, was a witch that resided in Naples. Age unknown, a baby-faced young female who liked to dress herself in fluttery dresses with plenty of frills, which, strangely, did not look out of place on her.

Liliana was only seven years old the first time she met Diana, who was already a young woman then.

From that time till now, roughly nine years later, she still bore the same smile, and her youthful appearance had not changed at all.

Be that as it may, the passage of time had not left her untouched , as shown recently by her crow's feet wrinkles, or the fact that her skin had not seemed as glamorous as before.

How old was she, exactly? It is probably best not to think too much about that.

Liliana hurriedly changed the topic of conversation.

"More importantly, Sir Salvatore is running late, and that is worrying."

"... Hmph! Lily, using such a topic to feign innocence. Being a Campione, how could anything bad possibly happen to our lord?"

Diana replied, sulking.

You're already way past your prime, please act more like your age.

Although Liliana really wanted to say that, she still resisted the temptation. No, it would be a very perilous thing to say.

"Naturally, that was not what I meant. What I was referring to was our lord's mental and psychological issues, because he is lazy and carefree, there are things he has to overcome himself."

Between them, only Liliana had directly met with the [King of Swords] before.

Upon hearing her words, Diana also showed a worried expression, and Karen nodded as though she had a sudden epiphany.

"In other words, do you mean to say that Sir Salvatore is that kind of person? ... ... If you discount the fact that he holds the power of the [King], personality wise, you would be hard-pressed to find something positive about him?"

"I often hear that he is a sloppy and forthright person."

Liliana took out her blue cellphone.

The problem was, Salvatore Doni did not carry these kinds of electronic devices with him when he went out.

It was said that even if he did bring one, he would lose it unknowingly, somehow. As a preventive measure, this time round he had an assistant, who would be of immense help in such situations.

After several rings, the person on the other end finally answered the call.

"This is Kranjcar... What is the current situation with our lord?"

"I'm sorry for being late. Though I managed to bring him in to Naples, the King stopped by Garibaldi Square for some gelato. Could you drop by to pick us up? I'll pass the burde- sorry, pass him over to you."

Although he seemed somewhat tired, he still spoke with a very harsh tone.

"That's fine, I'll be making my way over now. I'll meet up with you later then... ... Our lord has already arrived, I'll be going to pick him up right away. Diana, bring Karen with you to the underground first, this way it'll be faster."

After hanging up the phone, Liliana continued explaining the current situation to her comrades.

After hanging the 'Closed for Business Today' sign at the door, the three witches made their way outside, onto the streets of Naples.

Liliana soon split up with the other two and headed straight for Garibaldi Square.

Liliana Kranjcar was both a witch and a knight.

Her rival, Erica Blandelli, in a broader sense, was also a witch, but was probably closer to a [Female Mage].

There was a very thin line between being a [Witch] and a mage.

This had been defined by the sacred miko and priestesses of old .

Their knowledge and magic had been directly imparted from the witches of the previous generation.

Diana Milito, a witch of the [Bronze Black Cross] living in Naples, was also the person who had taught Liliana the arts of the witch. And Karen, who also had training in the same type of magic , was currently staying at Liliana's side for further education.

After bidding farewell to her companions, Liliana passed along Corso Umberto, gradually going towards Garibaldi Square.

The statue of the hero of the revolution, Giuseppe Garibaldi, watched over the station square.

As expected, the place was fully packed, but she had an idea where to go to find him.

That was because, from the crowds, she had heard two very familiar voices.

"Answer me, Salvatore Doni, although it was only just now that were you licking that gelato, when on earth did you go and buy this?"

"It's not good to worry about the little things, Andrea. Look up and enjoy the sky."

An eye-catching duo were discussing something.

One of them had black hair, wore silver framed glasses, and had an intellectual, somewhat neurotic look. On his slender face between his brows, a deep crease had formed.

The other person was a blond hunk with a seemingly carefree attitude.

"Look, the sun is pretty good today. And listen here, summer is in full bloom now. We're currently in Naples. The city of the shining sun and sea. This is the place for yachts, beaches, beer, barbeque and men and women of all ages to have fun—everything essential about summer! In a situation like this, there is only one thing I intend to accomplish here. Yes, that's right, it is to have a vacation!"

In his hand, was a bottle of limoncello.

It seemed like a very cooling and refreshing drink, the label on the bottle was imprinted with many drops of water. The blond man was sucking on his straw as he made his declaration.

To further add on, he was wearing an aloha shirt with flower patterns, indeed, he was dressed very casually.

"Sir Salvatore!"

Liliana called out towards him.

Without a doubt, this was Salvatore Doni, the strongest knight of Italy, the [King of Swords], one of the godslayers, a Campione.

"Ah, long time no see, erm... Kranjcar, was it?"

"She is Liliana Kranjcar, my king."

Facing the Campione who was happily greeting her, the bespectacled youth respectfully added.

His attitude and words had suddenly become very polite and business-like, reverting to an expressionless poker face, in contrast to before Liliana had called out to them, it could be described as an 'instantaneous reversal'.

His name is Andrea Rivera.

For Salvatore Doni, he was sometimes an aide, other times, a secretary, but most importantly, a manager.

Covering all types of tasks and errands, the youth known as [The King's Butler].

"Ah, is that so. Sorry, I can only remember the names of people I have met five times. You're probably around three times? I can't really remember your full name."

Facing the smiling [King], Liliana did a military style salute.

In actual fact she had met him six times, but she kept that to herself. It would be bad to be fooled by his personality. He was a true monster—even if all the magi in the world were to join forces against him, he still would be able to obtain victory, the immortal king of swords.

"Then, Liliana Kranjcar, I will now leave the king to you. If you don't mind, I will take my leave now to settle other pressing matters."

"That would not be a problem. You have my thanks, Sir Andrea. "

Liliana replied, expressing her gratitude.

Without Andrea Rivera, Salvatore Doni would be a mere warrior, unable to function as a leader of the magic world. This is why he had been granted the title of [The King's Butler].

"With that, my king, Liliana will be taking over from now on, please listen carefully to her instructions and act like a true king should. This, I sincerely ask of you."

Rivera made a request, in a respectful manner.

Upon hearing this, he, who was one of the seven devil kings in existence, frowned.

"I already know that. It's not like I'll be purposely making trouble for her, you simply worry too much."

"Forgive me, that is merely one of my responsibilities. If you will allow me to say this, I am worried that you might suddenly leave halfway due to your capricious nature, and as such, I have instructed Kranjcar to contact me immediately should such a situation arise. It would be my good fortune if you would bear that in mind."

If you run away, I won't be held responsible for what happens afterwards... His words seem to imply that.

Liliana agreed silently.

Rivera and Salvatore Doni were friends, even before the latter had obtained the power of a [King]. Even if one were to disregard that, he was still able to criticize the devil king directly without fear, this fortitude and diligence of his were to be admired, which is how he had obtained this role.

"I know, I know. Conversely, about the assignment I gave you, carry it out properly."

To his concerned butler, Salvatore Doni gestured with his hand for him to leave. Wordlessly, Rivera bowed, and promptly left, vanishing into the crowds.

"Where is Sir Andrea going?"

"Earlier, I had requested him to run some mundane errands... Alright then. Shall we go to finish things on your side?"

Doni answered Liliana's question with an air of boredom.

Finishing the rest of the limoncello, he picked up his suitcase which was resting on the ground.

It was a sleek black case that seemed like it could store something very large.

His title, the [King of Swords], might have something to do with the size of that suitcase.

"But, I just can't get excited over this—I heard that it was because that there might be danger that you asked for my help, but still..."

Doni complained lazily.

When all's said and done, compared to Dejanstahl Voban, he was much more manageable. His capriciousness could possibly be said to be part of the fearsomeness of the [King].

He was a resident of the battlefield. Somehow, that was the best way to describe him.

To the magi of Italy who knew that fact all too well, they treated his normal behavior and personality as simply a fashion fad of his generation.

"As I thought, without an enemy before my eyes, I just can't get fired up, don't you agree? We should get a few gods, demons, monsters or whatever, doesn't matter if they're friendly, and have a battle royale to spice things up —"

"My lord... As I suspect that the incident this time might have something to do with a god, or perhaps a dragon-like being, I believe that this will live up to your expectations."

Liliana said, conveying the facts concisely and simply.

If it were possible, she would have liked to obtain more accurate and reliable information before releasing the details, but there was no helping it.

Anyway, it was already enough that the king had been brought to Naples. The most important thing right now would be to prevent him from taking any unnecessary actions.

Hearing the news, Salvatore Doni's attitude changed immediately.

"Would you care to explain further, Liliana Kranjcar?"

Her full name that was not remembered no matter what she did , was clearly said this time.

His lips slightly twisting to one side in a grin, his previous slovenly attitude like that of a young boy had all but vanished. Salvatore Doni smiled gleefully, leaking out his true nature as a warrior.

Part 2

Originally, Naples was a colonial city of the ancient Greeks.

The remnants of stone pits, where slaves were once made by the people of old to work in. Then, the remnants of the sewage systems, water tanks built by the Romans of later generations. And after that, the remnants of underground warehouses that were used to store food, provisions, and liquor.

The traces of these constructs could still be found in present times, beneath the older streets.

Napoli Sotterranea—also otherwise known as [Underneath Naples].

"... ... Although these underground ruins have already become a sightseeing attraction, this specific part of the underground is not open to the public, as it has been sealed and hidden by the witches of Naples."

Liliana remarked, leading the way.

The district of Santa Lucia.

Facing the Bay of Naples, it consisted of the Santa Lucia harbor, Castel dell'Ovo and other sightseeing spots.

They entered an old clothing store in the district and greeted the middle-aged woman running the store.

Even if you wanted to compliment it, the clothing sold in the messy shop could not be described as 'decent'. The fat lady, who looked perfectly suited to the store, but was in fact Diana's subordinate, wordlessly brought them to the back of the shop.

The interior of the store was a place that only witches have been .

It was an entrance to the underground ruins below.

Unexpectedly, there was a square hole right in the middle of the bare ground. Stairs, carved from stone, extended into the depths below, and Liliana, who could see perfectly fine in pitch darkness, descended down the stairs without so much as a torchlight.

"... ... The [Snake] number the most, after that would be the [Cow]."

Doni, following behind Liliana, murmured to himself.

The pathway of the ruins was like an abandoned mine, long and narrow.

This place had used to be a quarry, dating back to the BC era, thus it would be very similar to an abandoned mine. However, the many drawings carved upon the walls suggested something else.

These were simple, primitive stick drawings, and it would not be hard to believe if someone said that these were carved by people from the Stone Age.

As Doni had said, there were many drawings that resembled snakes on the walls.

Some were depicted with very long, curling bodies, or multiple heads, and a few even had bat-like wings.

Other animals that were drawn included cows, birds, pigs and lions.

Someone with a magical background would instantly recognize these to be the likeness of goddesses of the land, and probably were carved after the coming of the Roman Empire.

"In the past, this was the location of a secret underground temple... ..."

Liliana softly whispered, not wanting to disturb the tranquility of these sacred grounds.

Ever since a certain patriarchal monotheistic religion became the official religion, the holy miko who possessed divine power were branded as [Witches], persecuted and hunted down.[12]

And thus, they fled to the underground. In order to preserve their wisdom and knowledge, they built this underground temple to pass on their teachings and arts.

These drawings portrayed the beliefs of the witches, symbolizing the gods.

"Incidentally, snakes seem to be like the guardian deities of witches, why is that so?"

Being asked this question out of the blue, Liliana hesitated for a moment.

In the ancient times, the miko who served the great goddesses of the land were the ones who became the first [Witches].

With the influx of Christianity and the decline of the traditional beliefs in Europe, the originally sacred miko were suppressed and boycotted, and were slowly regarded as heretical and to be feared.

The great goddesses of the land, in those days, usually were those that ruled over the domains of life and death.

Athena, Ishtar, Isis, Tiamat, Cybele, to name a few. The goddess of love and beauty, Aphrodite, was also originally a powerful great goddess of the land.

The sacred animal that represented the cycle of life and death was the snake.

And thus, the snake became the symbol of the goddesses of the land, the guardian spirit of the witches.

Though Liliana had some qualms about the reliability of the details on the occult in this kind of place, she decided to leave that matter aside for the moment.

"To explain that would consume a large amount of time. I will give you an explanation later, so please kindly wait in the meantime."

"Hahaha, sorry, sorry. I should have learnt that before, but I totally forgot all about it."

Doni's carefree attitude showed that he had no intention of reflecting on his actions.

Although Campiones and magi seemed to be similar beings, they were in actual fact, totally different existences.

Liliana once again deeply felt how true that statement was. Kusanagi Godou, who Erica Blandelli was enthusiastically chasing after, prior to becoming a Campione, had completely zero knowledge of the magical arts, a civilian.

"Then, the place your companions are currently hiding out at... ' Heraion', was it called?"

"Yes. A few months ago, the Gorgoneion that was discovered was the emblem of Medusa and Athena. And here, the Heraion is the emblem of the goddess Hera. Legends spoke of the goddess' hair being woven from snakes, and possessing a cow's eyes—these traits all point towards her being a goddess of the land."

In Greek mythology, Hera was the wife of Zeus.

However, she had originated from the Peloponnesian Peninsula as a guardian goddess of the earth.

After the area was conquered by the Indo-European sky-god worshipping people, Hera was forced to submit herself to Zeus.

Before long, the two of them had arrived at the underground temple.

A pair of witches stood beside a pillar of pure black—Diana Milito and Karen Jankulovski were waiting there.

"It is my honor to meet you, Sir Salvatore. For accepting our request, you have my deepest gratitude—"

"That's not important, let's go straight to the main topic. This is the rumored 'Heraion', isn't it?"

Doni quickly cut her off, inspecting the pillar.

It looked like it was made from obsidian.

From the ground, the pillar stretched upwards, like a growing tree.

On the surface, there were many drawings of serpents. Although it seemed clumsily carved onto the rock, one could not help but feel drawn towards it.

Approximately two meters tall, this was the Heraion.

"Alright, I'm feeling a rather incredible divine force from this."

"Yes. This was once discovered in Greece, and then painstakingly transported to this place, centuries ago, by the witches of Naples—our ancestors."

Diana explained.

She was completely serious now, a deep contrast with her previous behavior exhibited back in her bookstore; after all, she was a branch leader of Naples, in the [Bronze-Black Cross].

"It was spring this year—when we discovered the Gorgoneion in Calabria, when it began to react in resonance. Initially, the magical force was not yet so powerful and we could contain it by erecting the [Seclusion] barrier, but now..."

Recently, they have not been able to fully control it.

With a deep sigh, Diana finished her explanation, with Doni happily nodding his head.

"How nostalgic, the Gorgoneion? I was busy slacking off then."

"... ... Slacking off, did you say?"

"Yep. I was still recovering from my wounds from that last great battle with Godou then, so since I wasn't going to take care of it, didn't you have no choice but to explain matters to him, requesting his aid to clean things up?"

To Liliana, who was asking him with a reprimanding tone, Doni replied, blinking his eyes.

This youth with absolutely no sense of responsibility, had found a rivalry in another Campione, the boy who had gained immense power in just a day. Liliana, once again, felt the reality sink in.

Salvatore Doni was a warrior, through and through.

Whether it was joy, friendship, anger, love or pain, he could feel all these emotions on the battlefield. No matter how carefree or generous he seemed, this was not the true Salvatore Doni.

A place where he could truly be himself could only be the battlefield, while facing the strongest enemies.

Thus, he deeply loved the few enemies he had, befriending them, while polishing his blade in order to defeat them.

Although she and Erica were both considered to be prodigal magi, there was an insurmountable wall between them and him. Liliana had no choice but to accept this fact.

In the past, Salvatore Doni had been labeled as someone who could not keep up with his peers.

However, that was only because he was someone that normal standards did not apply to.

His talents and capabilities were well beyond the comprehension of normal people, completely disregarding his studies in the magical arts and focusing on martial prowess, the genius who beheaded a god with just his blade.

The innate nature of the [King of Swords].

Of course, his carefree and happy-go-lucky attitude could also be part of his innate nature...

"When I heard that the goddess was Athena, the first thought I had was 'Crap'! I'd have been really happy if I were the one to have fought with her, how regrettable... if I take the Heraion with me, Hera might show up, eh?"

"No, although I am hoping that the probability of that happening is low..."

Diana answered with a troubled expression. It would not be easy to bring out the pillar.

First, you would have to excavate it out of the ground, and then transport it.

Manpower and machinery were needed, and then if during the process, the Heraion reacted in a negative manner, it could very well turn into a dangerous situation.

"Come to think of it, you mentioned something about a dragon earlier, what was that about?"

Doni suddenly asked, and the three witches looked at each other, unsure of what to say.

(... ... Do we have to explain that as well?)

(... ... We have to. From the conversation earlier, you can tell that Sir Salvatore's knowledge of magic is of the same level as a trainee mage.)

(Fine, fine, and Karen, please don't say anything weird.)

The above was conveyed purely through eye contact.

As a Campione possessing tremendous powers and receiving the admiration of many, it was unbecoming that he had the knowledge of an outsider.

To grab the attention of everyone, Liliana coughed softly.

"From our deductions, dragons are a transformation of serpents, to put it more extremely, if you combine parts of birds, lizards, horses and lions with a snake, you would get a dragon."

"Eh? Is that so? Somehow it seems really far-fetched."

"That's not the case, when the holy miko fell and were branded as [Witch], the incarnation of the earth goddesses changed with the times and slowly became the [Dragon], the embodiment of ferocity and strength."

Liliana suddenly recalled the rumors about the feats performed by Salvatore Doni.

"By the way, Sir Salvatore, you probably should have authorities that are related to the power of the dragon, am I right?"

"Did I? Although I don't remember fighting a dragon before."

"Of course, although not in a direct confrontation, related to the dragon is—in other words, the hero with the power of water-based divine spirits and sacred beasts, have you not defeated him?"

The first god that was slain by Doni was the Celtic god king, Nuadha.

From Nuadha, he obtained the authority of demonic swords, and after that, he defeated the heretical god summoned by Marquis Voban, gaining the power of the dragon—the authority of the immortality of steel.

To the dragon slayers who have long since regarded dragons and snakes to be their target of conquest, channeled the properties of these beasts into their own power.

Doni nodded in acceptance to that reason.

"... ... I see. Well, I understand your point now."

"You understand? That is good to hear."

"No, I didn't understand what you were trying to say at all. But I've made it this far without knowing anything, so the meaning probably isn't that important, that's what I understood. It's fine, it's fine."

"... ... M-My lord, if you are fine with it, then I guess there is no problem."

Liliana finally understood that this person's head worked in a completely different way.

Despite his sloppy and reckless way of thinking, he had still made it through so many crises, definitely something that the average man could not accomplish. This was one of the reasons why he was so highly regarded.

"Then, what should we do about this Heraion? It is too big for me to bring it home like what Godou did."

The height that protruded above the ground was roughly two meters, meaning that it might be longer.

Doni looked at the Heraion that was a lot bit taller than him, smiled, and then suggested,

"If we hack it into two pieces, then slowly cut it into smaller sized pieces that can fit into my hand, I could put it in my luggage and bring it home... ... could that work?"

"Cut the Heraion into pieces!? This is a very important, sacred artifact!"

"I-Isn't that going a little too far?!"

Diana could not help but shout out loud, even the usually calm Karen had trouble keeping a composed face.

Forget the Gorgoneion, the Heraion was a sacred item to the European witches. Even if he was a [King], it was impertinent of him to make such a suggestion. Liliana continued, "Sir Salvatore, it is as Diana said! Furthermore, no matter how powerful your demonic swords are, they could never cut apart the earth goddess' artifact!"

"No, I think it is very possible to cut apart, because right now I don't have the feeling that it can't be cut apart, that's why I can do it."

Doni softly remarked, gazing intently at the Heraion.

He really intends to do it! Liliana, convinced of that, cried out,

"That would not be good. As of now, the Heraion has stored up a huge amount of earthen and water magical power. Although it is currently suppressed by the barrier that has been erected, should you use your authority now, the situation will quickly escalate out of control! In the worst case, the collected energy might be released in an explosion, completely annihilating Naples, which is why we should proceed with caution!"

"But, just simply sitting here and waiting for something to happen is simply too boring."

"That is why we had wanted to consult the [King], your opinion on the matter. After all, if gods are involved, you would be Italy's most knowledgeable specialist... ... Besides cutting it up into small pieces, do you have any other suggestions?"

"Hmm... ... if that's the case..."

After being severely reprimanded by Liliana, Doni sank into deep thought, and quickly shook his head.

"Nope, can't think of anything. Not at all."

"My lord! Please think about it more seriously!"

One's pace could not help but to be disrupted when dealing with this [King].

Liliana was angered and frustrated to the point where she was almost shouting, literally breaking out in cold sweat. If one were to speak to Marquis Voban in the same way, they would be instantly executed.

Doni still had that carefree smile on his face, ignoring the verbal disrespect.

"Well, what I wanted to say was that everyone is tired. For now, let's head back and have a good rest as it's already getting late. Maybe we'll manage to think of something good tomorrow!"

There were no reasons to object to his order.

To keep staying in front of the Heraion would be a waste of time, thus the three witches, along with the [King of Swords], begun to head back, but... ...

On the way back, Doni did not stop smiling to himself.

From his expression, Liliana could not help but feel a sense of dread, and silently steadied her determination for what might come tomorrow.

Part 3

That night, Salvatore Doni stayed in an inn that they had arranged for him.

Liliana and Karen were both staying over at Diana's house. With that, the day's clamor and activities have long ended... or so it should have been.

It was half past twelve, midnight, when the lonesome figure of Liliana could be seen travelling on the streets of Naples.

They had come here before during the day, the coastal main street of Santa Lucia district.

This time was not considered very late during summer in these big cities of Europe, hence there were still quite a few signs of human activity. To carousers and partygoers, this would be their favorite time of the day to head out.

Although Naples did not have a low crime rate, this was one of the safer districts to be (On the older streets, there were high chances of running into pickpockets and robbers).

Liliana did not go out at night often.

Although she had full confidence in her abilities, it just didn't feel right to her.

... ... With an unease she could not get rid of, Liliana walked into a cafe that operated at night, ordered a few sandwiches to satisfy her hunger and a coffee to keep her awake, and continued on her way.

She broke into a run, there was a place she had to reach as soon as possible.

At any rate, the young women on the streets caused her to knit her brows in disapproval whenever she passed by them.

The amount of skin exposed, wasn't it a little too much?

Camisoles, tank tops were fine. Even if it was summer, being so daring as to expose their midriffs and bra straps, Liliana could not approve of that.

Incidentally, Liliana was dressed plainly.

A loose fitting blue shirt matched with black suit pants. Though it gave her a clean, beautiful look, somehow it gave the impression that she was an unfashionable person.

Finally arriving at her destination, the place she had decided that she had to return to during the evening.

The old clothing store ran by the fat witch. Because she had an uneasy feeling, she decided to stand guard overnight.

(If it's that guy, it's likely that he will come here...)

(No doubt, better to be safe than sorry...)

After explaining the reason for her unease to her comrades, that was how they replied.

Trust between people was something that was nurtured through normal, daily actions. Having learnt that lesson, she blew a whistle.

A short while passed before a thin, frail stray cat slowly strode up to her.

Before dinner, she had bound the cat by means of a magical contract, and had it watch over the store for her, reporting any suspicious activity.

She placed the palm of her hand on top of the cat, and extracted the cat's memories.

"... ... It's as we expected, such a headache."

What they thought would happen, had happened, and Liliana walked towards the old bookstore.

The doors were made from old wood, and the lock in the doorknob could be opened if you had the necessary skill. As he probably could not use [Unlock] magic, some sort of lock-picking skills must have been employed.

"That guy, why does he always have these kind of weird skills!"

She shouted angrily, and pushed open the door.

The familiar fat lady was lying on the floor, unconscious.

Liliana quickened her pace and reached the underground complex of the Heraion after a few minutes of running. There, she saw the [King], who seemed to be in a pretty happy mood.

"Sir Salvatore!"

"Hm? Kranjcar? Why are you here?"

"Of course, because you were acting strange earlier, that's why I have come here on purpose!"

"... ... Wh-what?"

In the deepest part of the underground ruins, she once again met with the devil king, Salvatore Doni.

"I'm begging you, please don't pull these kinds of stunts! Could you have thought that you would peremptorily do everything by yourself before we nag and chastise you, did you!?"

"You're really impressive, to have managed to predict my actions to this extent... ... Not bad."

In the face of the female knight's interrogation, Doni could only reply in a soft voice, his expression stiff.

He seemed to be repentant about it. Although they had already expected this to happen, he really was a useless member of society.

Liliana really wanted to let out a deep sigh at their lack of options.

To prevent the manifestation of the [Heretical God] was what she wanted to discuss with the godslaying devil king, which was a perfectly natural human thing to do, but her partner wasn't really human anymore.

Italy's [King of Swords] was such a man, like a ticking bomb of shenanigans that could go off at any moment.

Residing in the nearby Balkan peninsula was the [Marquis], dangerous like a wild beast.

The [Kings] residing in America and China were too far away for them to have any relations with.

England's [Black Prince], was famous for having a terrible personality and being a ruffian.

Alexandria's [Queen] had not been heard of for centuries and has been living in seclusion as a hermit.

Lastly, the [King] of Japan that came to Italy occasionally... ... With an upright character, a youth who had somewhat good prospects for the future, but did not have an eye for women. In conclusion, he was definitely no good.

"It can't be helped. Besides using a sword, there's no other way around this."

While smiling, Doni grabbed his usual black case with his hands.

Until now, the case had been hanging off his shoulders, inseparable from his body. He flipped open the cover, and retrieved the weapon inside, and then threw the scabbard onto the floor.

A blade of pure steel.

Unlike the magic swords used by Liliana and Erica, nor was it the work of a master swordsmith.

It looked just like some mass manufactured product, besides being a sword, there was nothing special about it. Nevertheless, the steel was of a quality enough to match that of the strongest magic swords on earth.

... ... Liliana and the others would never walk around like that, carrying the sword wherever they went, as they could directly summon the magic swords out of thin air.

The reason Doni did not do so was mainly because he was poor at the magical arts—he could not. Even if it was a basic spell like this, he simply couldn't cast it.

In spite of that, he was emitting a tremendous amount of magical energy. Liliana sucked in her breath.

"M-My lord, could you possibly be thinking of using your sword!?"

"Ah, no. I didn't draw my blade to kill you or anything like that, don't worry about it... Listen, you know in those historical Japanese movies, there's this 'mineuchi' thing, right?[13] I was wondering if I could do the same now."

"There's no way I can believe that will happen!"

Liliana, who had quite a fair bit of knowledge on Japanese culture, wished that Doni would not take those sword fighting scenes in those old Japanese movies so seriously and attempt to mimic them, but she was more worried about the stance he had taken.

Relaxing half his body, his sword was left hanging loose from his right hand.

The knights who have seen Salvatore Doni in action would all know this fact, that his combat stance was simply unbelievably shocking. There was no special skill or technique involved. A stance that prepared for neither offense nor defense.

A completely natural and relaxed stance, free, unfettered and flexible. A stance that could adapt to anything in response, and then cut down everything in its path.

As there were no humans that could be a match for him, thus this stance, meant for adaptability, was what he had learnt to use, in his numerous conflicts with gods, demons, devil kings and monsters—the extraordinarily powerful foes that logic did not apply to.

"Since you won't let me use the 'mineuchi', you'll have to suffer the consequences. Are you ready?"

Doni said with a carefree tone.

Liliana instantly employed the summoning magics, and her weapon materialized.

There were no thoughts behind her actions, merely the instinct of a knight, spontaneous actions in response to a battle.

Il Maestro—bearing the title of the "master musician"—the magic sword with historical origins.

The blade was gently curved, it was an elegant silver saber. As Liliana grabbed the weapon and took a stance, Doni moved forward towards her. His speed was neither fast, nor slow.

A neutral stance, as though he were stepping into a friend's house.

At the same time the sword in his right hand drew an arc as it slashed at Il Maestro.

Liliana did not move out of the way.

On the contrary, she aimed to lock her blade with Doni's, and reach a stalemate. Entangling their blades together, sealing the opponent's techniques and movements.

But, she was not able to parry Doni's light blow.

Conversely, Il Maestro was easily sent flying out of her hand, disarming her.

It had been a blow from his empty left hand that did it.

And again, in that neutral stance, yet another blow landed on the region of her solar plexus. It seemed like a light blow, yet she felt such a great impact on her body, leaving her gasping for breath, unable to summon any of her strength.

Liliana was breathing hard, bending over at her knees. Compared to her, his strength was in a completely different dimension, she could neither defend nor attack.

"... .... Well, that's how it is. If you try and get in my way again, I'll let you experience firsthand my forty-eight killing techniques, capable of causing anyone to fall in a dream-like trance and fainting, or my fifty-two submission techniques that would serve you a full course of having all your joints in your arms and legs broken, be more obedient from now on!"

After saying that cheerily, he turned around and walked to the Heraion.

Liliana could not even stand up properly at this point, much less stop him. Furthermore, his right hand was still glowing with a silver light.

She felt the goosebumps rise on her skin. The [King of Swords] was channeling all of his strength and power.

Doni's right hand was no longer a human hand of flesh and blood.

It was a radiant silver-white metal arm, as if made by a genius master craftsman, a work of artistic splendor.

"I will make this oath now. I, I will not allow anything that cannot be cut to exist in this world. For this sword of mine, is the invincible blade that cuts down all without fail!"

Doni made an arrogant proclamation. No, perhaps it was more like the soul of the language surging forth.

Turning the strength of his words into a tremendous amount of magical energy, focusing that into his sword of steel, transforming it into a one-of-a-kind magical sword of vast power, and with that, the [King] swung his sword right at the black pillar.

The Heraion was sliced apart into two clean halves.

The silver arm that transformed the sword of steel, which was then able to cut any being on this earth with no exception. This was the [Ripping Arm of Silver], the authority obtained from the god Nuadha.

Even if it were a rusty sword or a swiss army knife, it could also be turned into an unrivaled magical sword.

It was an extremely simple authority. A single sword that could split the earth and the seas. It was a simple and yet immensely powerful ability.

Liliana witnessed it with her own eyes.

From the halves of the Heraion, burst forth a massive amount of magical energy in the form of a lava-like substance.

The brilliantly glowing green magma flowed across the ground, overflowing with magical energy, and then suddenly, a surge of magical power shot towards the ceiling from the floor of the underground ruins, like a volcanic eruption.

Part 4

Humans, magi and various other kinds, the race of the intelligent and cunning, named them as [Heretical Gods].

What gave birth to these supernatural existences?

No one really knows the truth behind this, what they can only do is come up with theories, these were the only results after much racking of their brains.

Even the gods who were named as such were unable to answer this question themselves, though it was no fault of theirs.

Before the [Heretical Gods] had realized, they were already roaming through the lands, establishing themselves as an independent existence. They could not even remember the process of their birth.

"... ... For what purpose have I been brought into this world for? Even if I ask myself that, I don't know the answer. Whether I should be sad or happy about this, I don't know that either."

The god who had just obtained a physical form asked rhetorically, with a bitter smile.

A smile that gave off a feeling of frustration.

Not knowing, that in itself was interesting. There was no need to worry over that.

Wanting to find out their reason for existence, trying to find their genuine selves—fretting over such delicate woes, it was not the style that was becoming of a hero from the ancient times.

That being said, that fundamental essence of a god would be [Myth].

Besides that, the lands of the people who spread these myths, or the unexplainable incidents that happened on these lands, between these factors, there must be some kind of link.

A glance at the immediate surroundings.

Although the area had been shrouded in the darkness of the night, this was no problem to the eyes of a god.

This was a mountain, probably a volcano, not much greenery could be seen, probably due to the higher composition of metal of the earth, and there were red volcanic rocks everywhere.

—Mount Vesuvius.

He did not know the name that the humans have given it, and he continued to survey the land before him.

The place he was at was about halfway up the mountain. From there, he could see that the sea and also a city in which humans lived were not too far off. To the eyes of an archer, this was nothing.

"... ... Ho. This seems interesting."

In a corner of the city, near the coast, there was an explosion of magical energy.

The essence of earth and water, in the form of emerald light, was surging out.

Like a volcanic eruption—the instant he thought of that, he finally realized why he had manifested.

The essence of earth, of the land. Perhaps it was the snake of the mother of the land, the mystical force that belonged to the Queen of the earth.

And what was he currently standing on? A mountain of fire, earth and metal.

Who was he? A hero. Steel within his hands, a flame burning within him, a defender of the land.

"The essence of the earth, the spirits of steel, are they calling for me? If that's the case, then what comes next, would be that."

He released the divine energy stored in his body.

The emerald energies reacted with his own divine energies, refining it into a tremendous, massive body of life force.

The idea of a serpent served as a foundation for that giant body.

It had a length that surpassed the sea serpent that he had once defeated in his legend, causing the civilians that looked up at the sky to scream in terror.

After that came huge bat-like wings sprouting from its back.

From the body, four short limbs, like those of a lizard.

The shape of the head resembled the crocodile's, and within the gaping maw there were many razor-sharp, blade-like teeth—it was the birth of a dragon.

In the skies above the coastal city, the gargantuan dragon spread its wings, and circled around slowly.

The god smiled in satisfaction.

The creation of a worthy enemy from the essence of the land. For a hero that was also known as a war god, was this not a joyous occasion?

At any rate, as long as there was an enemy he had to defeat, it was fine. As long as there was an obstacle to be overcome, he would be satisfied.

If there were damsels in distress as well, that would be even better, but having an enemy was more important, because without that, there wouldn't be any distress at all. Then there would be no point in being a hero!

Blood burning with excitement, he rushed ahead, but quickly came to a halt.

"Ah, that's right, I ought to declare my name."

As a hero of bravery and beauty, it was only natural for him to do so.

If the sound of his name did not leave a deep impression on the humans, it would be a great blow to his pride.

After a while of careful consideration, and establishing that it would be more appropriate to refrain from that, he instantly fell to his knees in despair.

"I... I almost thought I was going to die..."

Liliana Kranjcar, who had finally escaped from that crisis, said to herself weakly.

After everything was bathed in the light from the Heraion, the ceiling had started to collapse due to the intense exposure to magical energies.

If this continues, I'll be buried alive!

The moment the earthquake-like tremors started to spread through the underground ruins, Liliana had leapt into action.

When even the large rocks begun falling onto her head, Liliana instantly used the [Leap] magic. With the use of this spell, a distance of several hundred meters could be covered in roughly ten seconds.

To onlookers, it would have seemed like teleportation. Though, it was merely a high speed movement across a large distance, not a teleportation skill.

Through the gigantic hole in the ceiling that had been created by the energy from the Heraion, she escaped with [Leap] magic onto the surface above. Were she a tad bit slower, it would have been very likely that she would be trapped by the collapsing rocks.

As of now, she was at the coastal end of Santa Lucia district.

This was no sandy beach, but a sparse outcrop of marble covered the area, serving as a breakwater of sorts. It was only a short walking distance back to the streets of Santa Lucia.

To get back to the old bookstore would take only about ten minutes.

After running through the entire underground ruins, getting back up here with [Leap], she had lost track of her bearings, and thus she surveyed the general area again.

Earlier, the stored magical energy of the Heraion had exploded.

The explosion leveling the city. She had feared this, but the harbor seemed to be largely unaffected, there were no real visible damage to the environment.

Liliana felt relieved.

Of course, the loss of the precious underground sanctuary was regrettable. The people living directly above it might have been affected, but it was still better than having the entire city blown sky high.

... ... Yes, although that was preferable, but...

Looking up, Liliana realized how wrong she was.

A dragon. A flying dragon.

In the skies above the harbor was a massive dragon, gliding freely through the skies with its wings spread out wide, haughtily looking at the world beneath it.

The wingspan was at least thirty meters long, and the scales were glinting with a faint emerald color.

Compared to the modern depiction of the dragon, its head and body were long like that of a snake. Maybe it looked a little weird, but that hardly seemed important at the moment.

The way the chimaera-being known as the dragon was depicted changed depending on the time and place.

Ever since the olden days, Europe had many different stereotypes of the dragon.

Limbless dragons, wingless dragons, or conversely, dragons with overly long wings and limbs which resembled a Pegasus, but the modern dragon was the one depicted in fantasy movies and video games.

"As I thought, was it born when the Heraion was cut apart...?"

"Whoa, isn't it awesome? I really didn't think that a dragon would pop out of that pillar. It sure gave me a surprise."

While Liliana was staring dumbly at the dragon and murmuring to herself, a cheerful voice had said suddenly.

She wasn't surprised.

As she managed to escape unscathed herself, there was no doubt that he would make it out as well. Liliana turned her head, and found Salvatore Doni simply standing there leisurely, with not a scratch on him.

As expected of the one who possessed the authority, [Man of Steel].

Obtained from the Nordic hero Siegfried, it was an authority that allowed one to obtain a semi-immortal body that was tougher than steel, the cave-in earlier must have seemed like the pattering of raindrops to him.

"... ... My lord. Although this is not a hard thing to do, because your actions earlier have resulted in the birth of that dragon, please do control yourself in the future!"

"I know, it's fine. I'll take responsibility and beat down that guy! "

"Please don't do that! If you destroy the divine beast formed from the spiritual essence of the land, the spiritual veins in the entire region might dry up! It's too risky!"

Liliana shouted, while looking up at the dragon.

In oriental Chinese geomancy, it could also be referred to as the earth's vein, or dragon's vein.

The dragon was surely an embodiment of that kind of power.

Destroy it, and what would remain would be a barren land and a sea of death. That was a future predicted with the spirit sense of the witches, and had to be avoided at all costs.

The sounds of flapping wings could be heard as the dragon approached the harbor.

As it was a creature that disregarded the laws of physics, it would not have mattered even if it did not have the necessary organs for flight.

The dragon continued to circle leisurely in the skies.

Two knights stood on the harbor of Santa Lucia, gazing up at it.

One of them was vigorously burning with fighting spirit, raring for a fight, while the other wore an expression of worry, wanting to prevent that from happening.

As if sensing Doni's fighting spirit, the emerald dragon, with an air of an emperor, looked down at the [King of Swords], and suddenly roared.

GUAAAAAAA!!!

The thunderous roar of the dragon in the deep night caused the entirety of Naples to shake.

At the same time, from the gigantic dragon's body, radiated an intense amount of magical energy.

Could the dragon be capable of using spells of magical or divine nature!? Liliana felt a wave of fear wash over her, and then something changed within the sea—A wave. A gigantic wave was headed towards them.

The waves crashed against the harbor violently.

The rhythm of the surging water and sounds began to rapidly increase in tempo.

What was only the soft, calm waves of the night, had turned into this state of fury in a mere ten seconds.

"Hmm, by just increasing the strength of the waves a little bit, what is it trying to do?"

"It's not 'little'! Please open your eyes and look at that!"

Liliana, in a state of panic, warned the perfectly calm Doni.

A genius in melee combat, a pure-blooded warrior, and in the realm of the Campiones, with the exception of the religious cult founder Luo Hao, he could be considered as the strongest. However, he had a weakness, or rather, a vice.

He was inept at judging and analyzing magical warfare.

That was because of his absolute resilience against offensive magic, a Campione that had a body tougher than steel, like a metal wall.

Even if he were to be subjected to an overwhelming magical assault, he would be able to endure it, and launch a counterattack with his sword.

It was not an ideal style to fight with, but he did not care much for these trifling details, only about whether he could immerse himself in battle.

The force of the dragon's summoned wave had intensified even more within seconds.

From the sea came a feeling of the onset of a storm. The waves crashed non-stop against the harbor, and from the far distance, a tsunami approached menacingly, like an avalanche.

It was something that should not have been able to occur here, in this quiet inner bay, that gigantic wave that carried the wrath of nature.

"Sir Salvatore!?"

"Hmph, against this wave, with my blade, I will... oh crap! I dropped it back in the underground area!! H-hold on a second! Let's settle this in a fair fight, ok!?"

As Liliana shouted at the [King] in desperation, Doni complained loudly.

They were immediately hit by the incoming tsunami, and swept away.

Why, what did I do to deserve this!

Liliana was swallowed by the waves, cursing her own fate.

Her body still ached a little after that blow from Doni, but as she could not let herself drown like this, she started to swim towards the surface, ignoring the weight of her drenched clothes.

And suddenly, a huge emerald colored body had appeared beneath her, and dragged her upwards.

After a few tens of seconds had passed.

Somehow, she was at what seemed to be the base of the neck of the dragon, flying far above the seas. Although Doni had been swallowed up by the tsunami as well, only she had been scooped out of the sea.

"W-were you the one who saved me?"

She murmured, asking him. No answer came from the dragon.

The dragon born from the Heraion, the artifact of the goddess of the land, most probably treated the witches who safeguarded the pillar as comrades, thus it had saved her.

Liliana breathed a sigh of relief.

At the same time, Liliana suddenly remembered about the [King], causing her to feel worried, but felt that he was probably fine.

That superman should not have drowned like this.

He would probably have casually swum towards some unknown shore, and then say something like 'Eeh... I thought I was going to die'.

The dragon was still circling around in the skies, but it had started to pick up its speed.

The view of the harbor slowly drew closer and closer, the most striking landmark being the Castel dell'Ovo.

It was a construction that was built on a piece of land in the middle of the sea, the official name being Castel dell'Ovo. The nickname that people had given it was [Egg Castle]. 'If this egg breaks, then calamity will be brought down upon this castle and Naples!' was the prediction that people once had, which was the origin of the nickname.

This structure that was built in the medieval times, for the purpose of observing the seas, had now become a popular tourist attraction.

Visitors could enjoy the view of the entire city of Naples from the roof of the building.

The dragon landed on the road leading up to the Castel dell'Ovo from the city. The castle and the harbor were located on the land protruding outwards from the Santa Lucia district.

The dragon obediently let its passenger off onto the ground.

Someway or the other, she had managed to make it back safely. Letting the sea breeze dry her clothes, she began to think about her next course of action.

It was at this moment when lightning flashed across the sky.

To be exact, it came from the sky to the east, perhaps from the area of Mount Vesuvius.

Alongside the sound of the thunder, the lightning took the form of a humanoid before her.

This was the visage of the most handsome man that Liliana had ever seen.

Golden hair that reminded you of the blazing sun, elegant and delicate brows. A robust, divinely body.

The white clothing and cloak he wore were clearly not from this age.

[Heretical God]

Without a doubt, at first sight, Liliana confirmed this fact.

Mankind's greatest disasters, gods that wandered the land, bringing destruction with them.

Although she had expected to meet one sometime in her life, she never thought it would be this soon.

It was an unexpected development, causing her heartbeat to accelerate, her throat becoming extremely dry.

This handsome man could kill her, Liliana Kranjcar, in an instant with ease, an existence beyond mortal comprehension.

Although in this aspect he was completely the same as Salvatore Doni, on the other hand, he gave off a very strong, intense aura that could be felt deeply by Liliana's heart.

It was mainly a mixed feeling of fear and admiration, but there was also something that felt strange about him.

Just the sight of the beautiful countenance of the god made her stop in her tracks, her mind blank.

However, only his appearance was similar to that of a human, merely borrowing their shape.

There was only one human here right now. Liliana quickly made up her mind.

She had no choice but to find out by herself what the god wanted.

"... ... What mythology or place are you a god of? If it's ok with you, will you kindly tell me your name?"

Upon hearing her respectful request, the beautiful young god smiled.

"Well asked, young lady. My name, my identity, I have been worried whether I should tell you that... as I thought, it would be better that I should grace you with my name. I am Perseus. Remember it well."

As though he had some issues on the inside, he gave his name after a while.

The dragon behind Liliana growled in a low tone.

It was a warning of the danger looming ahead, from the meeting of a sworn, bitter enemy, and the unavoidable battle that was to come.

Chapter 3 - Hero's Sojourn

Part 1

It had almost been two hours since they began their voyage across the sea in the night. It was already past twelve midnight.

Kusanagi Godou heaved a sigh of relief as soon as the shore and city lights came into view. Setting out on a journey, not knowing the destination, this ordeal was almost at an end.

Athena's manipulation of the yacht's velocity was an evident abnormality.

If they traveled at this speed on land, the consequences would be unimaginable. Godou had prayed that no obstacles would appear before their path on the voyage.

Due to the fact that they were getting close to their destination, their speed had reduced greatly, and Godou was deeply grateful for it.

There was a gigantic castle next to the harbor.

It was a special landmark, for sure. They were probably still within Italy's boundaries, but he had not a clue where he was. A quick observation showed that the city was of considerable magnitude.

"... Hey, what is that place? Is there a reason why we came here? "

"Hmm? Where are we, eh? I don't know."

His reasonable question was answered with an irresponsible answer.

"Don't ask me that, Kusanagi Godou. I merely felt where the winds were blowing to. In the first place, wasn't this *that* sort of journey? I entrusted our fate to the guidance of the wind, advancing in the same direction, it was merely divine ordain. Moving like clouds in the sky."

On the 'borrowed' yacht, the goddess Athena murmured softly.

To the average modern person, it would be a ridiculous idea, but Godou didn't really mind, and only just wanted to tell her not to do things as though she were Homer, the Greek poet, improvising poems in real time.

It was this moment when a sudden change happened.

From a corner of the harbor, an emerald light could be seen stretching towards the heavens.

"What is going on, over there?"

"Hm... It seems like someone had carelessly stimulated the essence of the land."

Godou and Athena observed the situation from their yacht—

The emerald light gradually shifted into a familiar shape... a dragon, spreading wings of over ten meters and soaring through the air, a massive dragon with emerald scales.

"As I thought, is that a god of something?"

"No, it's probably something like a divine beast although its origins should have connections to a god..."

Being used to this, it was terrifying. It was preferable that the enemy was not a god this time, Godou thought.

As the god and the devil king looked on, the gigantic dragon slowly descended onto the ground.

Soon after, a light like a flash of lightning, from nowhere, as if aiming for the dragon, swooped down somewhere in its general vicinity.

"...I have a really bad feeling about this."

"It seems my prediction was spot on, we have just witnessed the descent of a troublesome god. Fufu, things are just starting to get interesting."

The yacht, propelled by Athena's divine power, slowly drew closer to the land.

Thus, Kusanagi Godou and the heretic goddess arrived at the most dangerous city in Italy.

Perseus.

He defeated the snake-haired demon Medusa in Greek Mythology, and then, when the princess of Ethiopia, Andromeda was about to be sacrificed to a monster, he engaged in battle with said monster by the seaside, and obtained victory, saving the princess.

It was well-known that he was a god that represented the slaying of serpents, dragon and snakes alike.

[Perseus and Andromeda Style] was a term that referred to myths of similar themes.

The Heraion—the loss of control of the symbol of the land would bring about the manifestation of its sworn enemy, this was what Liliana Kranjcar had thought, having noticed the possibility of such an occurrence.

"Not in Greece, nor in Iraq, but right in the middle of Italy, why did this, so suddenly..."

A murmur escaped from her lips. But, she knew that [Heretic Gods] could manifest in places their original myths had nothing to do with, thus she was not that bothered by it.

"Well then, you have heard my name, beautiful maiden. To show your respect to the great name of the serpent slaying warrior, it would be best to leave now. After my introduction, it is now time for me to display my valor."

Perseus flashed a brilliant smile, showing his pearly-whites.

He was surely not your normal pretty boy, his smile both bold and charming. As though in response, the dragon behind Liliana roared.

GRAAAAAAAA!!

A terrible, loud sound.

It caused Liliana's slender body to shake uncontrollably, the sheer magnitude of the sound almost bursting her eardrums. Not just the harbor of Santa Lucia, perhaps the entire city of Naples had felt that.

And in return to that roar, a sword materialized in Perseus' palm.

It was over a meter long, its blade thick and heavy like a cleaver . A fitting sword for a hero—Not good.

To prevent the start of a battle, Liliana called out to that beautiful hero.

"God Perseus, please stop! This dragon is formed, from Naples—from the essence of the land—a divine beast, if you carelessly destroy it, the spiritual aura of the land will die along with it, please stay your hand!"

"Young lady, that I cannot do."

Perseus answered, with a faint smile.

"Slaying dragons and serpents is what I embody. It is the duty and responsibility of a hero, thus, the actions I must perform, if I were to give up on it halfway, it is unforgivable!"

"Because of that reason, you won't care what happens to the land!?"

"This is for the sake of completing my duty. It can't be helped."

He said cheerily, as though he were shining like the sun.

Those were cheesy lines only a true hero who fought for mankind and saved damsels could utter. Somehow, the pretty boy—speaking those words and radiating elegance—was also a seasoned warrior, tempered and forged in battle.

"It would be best if you stood back. The role of a young maiden is to stand by and wait to be saved by the hero, and offer her love to the victorious. It would be presumptuous of you to interfere any more than that!"

Liliana was frozen to the spot after being coldly reprimanded. A thinly-veiled threat.

Even if she were to use up all her strength, she still had to stop Perseus. Although that is what her mind had decided, her body would not obey. Her limbs would not move, no, rather, could not move.

It might have been the power of his words.

Perseus—the serpent-slaying hero—in his overwhelming presence, Liliana could only gulp.

She did not know that the girl she saw as a rival had once, before the war god Verethragna, experienced a similar event. To be suppressed like this under the authority of a god, it was indeed vexing.

"Hahaha, such an obedient girl. If it's fine with you, after I fell the dragon, fall into my embrace like a saved maiden, reenacting the tale of Andromeda!"

As Perseus said that...

The emerald dragon spread its wings out and took off, probably intending to engage the hero from the air.

Opening its maw, revealing its razor-sharp teeth and dark red tongue.

—An open show of hostility.

From the ferocious snarl of the divine beast, Liliana understood that.

From its maw, flames came spewing forth, as if to cleanse the land clean, sacred flames that engulfed Perseus.

However, in that mere instance, the beautiful hero's form had seemingly turned into that of a brilliant white meteor.

At speeds beyond what Liliana's eyes could follow, his movements were like that of a meteor—terrifyingly fast—and it was also then that he threw his sword straight up into the sky.

Spinning through the air, it easily hacked off the wing of the emerald dragon.

GUAAAAAAAA!!

The giant beast howled in agony.

—The dragon descended towards the harbor, with its neck raised, still indicating its determination to fight on. However, the speed of Perseus would not allow it to do so.

Catching his sword that flew back into his hand like a boomerang, he leapt off the ground.

It was a mere tenth of a second.

Within that split second, Perseus was already at the side of the dragon, and with a flick of his sword, he hacked open the dragon's massive neck, causing emerald blood to gush out of the wound.

The gigantic dragon, once again, howled, or rather, wailed.

Although the neck had not been completely severed, it was more than halfway to a complete decapitation.

—If only it were us magi who had engaged the dragon instead.

Liliana thought to herself, watching the spectacle unfold, even if the world's greatest magi practiced the best strategy, did a complete surround, even so, it would not even be close to an assured victory.

To the magi, dragons were divine beasts of such immense power.

However, the being with the appearance of a human in front of her, was easily forcing the dragon into a corner, intending on taking its life.

This was a [Heretic God], a being of such terrifying might.

Though he had the attitude, style and bravery of a hero, she could only see a symbol of ill omen. While she was still rooted in her fear, a voice could suddenly be heard.

"Hold it, the war god over there. The one you should be fighting is right here. As a god, picking on a divine beast, isn't it simply pitiful?"

"Fufu, the dragon's dependents, aren't you. How disrespectful, isn't it an overstatement to denounce me as such?

Perseus jumped aside while answering, putting distance between him and the dragon.

Guaaaaaaa......

The weakened dragon cried out.

From around the divine beast that was almost slain by the hero, appeared a young girl who looked slightly over ten years old. It was not known when she had arrived at the harbor, but more importantly, why would such a girl be here—Wait...

Liliana realized she was also a [Heretic God].

Bathing in the moonlight, glimmering silver hair, eyes blacker than darkness. The divine aura of a powerful goddess, guardian the land, ruler over darkness, could be felt. A great goddess of the land, and a rather famous one at that.

Engulfed in the divine aura emitted by the goddess, Liliana felt her body grow hot.

An encounter with she, the guardian goddess of witches and serpents, who, under the divine protection of the almost full moon, the [Strega][14], she, whose magical strength was at its peak.

Nevertheless, it was thanks to her arrival that Liliana had broken out of Perseus' binding. Regaining her freedom to move, she quickly checked her surroundings, and saw that behind the goddess, was someone who clearly should not be present here.

"Kusanagi Godou? Why are you here in such a place!?"

"You are Erica's friend—Liliana—am I right?"

And so, the Campione from the far east, exchanged greetings with her.

A chance meeting with a hero, a goddess and a devil king. Liliana became depressed with this foreboding ill omen.

Part 2

Somehow, this night, was a night destined for encounters with acquaintances, one after another.

In this harbor which he didn't know, he chanced upon someone he had met before, and breathed a sigh of relief.

"Kusanagi Godou, there's something I'd like to ask you, but..."

Liliana Kranjcar left the side of the dragon, walking over to him.

A beautiful, fairy-like maiden of Eastern European lineage.

"Did you, by any chance, bring that goddess to Naples?"

"The opposite. She—Athena—brought me to Naples."

It seemed that this place was Naples.

Godou had been dying to find out his current location.

A knight like Liliana, upon hearing that name, would surely realize the severity of the situation. Her eyes widened in shock, then quickly nodded.

"... Athena. The goddess you had fought with this spring, right? "

She did not probe any further into this, and immediately turned her attention towards the confrontation between the two gods. Indeed, she was a serious and rational person, someone who could be relied on and trusted in situations like this.

"Then, I shall report the current situation promptly. The [Heretic God] over there is the hero Perseus. To Athena, with the aspect of serpents and as a goddess of the land, he is a natural enemy, please take heed of this."

"Come to think of it, Athena and Medusa are both one and the same god, it seems."

Godou nodded at Liliana's warning of Perseus' advantage over Athena.

Although he had forgotten most of the knowledge of Athena, he still had a general idea.

While they were talking, the pair of gods were gazing intently at each other. It was not out of romance, but intense enmity, it was rather headache inducing to watch them.

"True, we are the dependents of the dragon. After all, they are the descendants of the wise snakes, my beloved children... Should some ruffian brandish and harm them with a blade, as their guardian goddess, I would naturally defend them."

"I, Perseus, do not have any interest in picking a fight with a woman, but..."

The two gods faced each other provocatively.

Though polite in their speech, their eyes gleamed with hostility.

"If my foe is the mighty goddess Athena, then it would be disrespectful to refuse you."

"Perseus, was it?"

"To the one previously known as Medusa, it should be quite an unforgettable name. To have a chance at wiping away your disgrace of your defeat in the myths is amusing, don't you think?"

"...Hmph, such a distasteful fellow. To mention that name on purpose, truly a foolish man."

Athena said in a hateful tone, grimacing.

"Very well, I will accept your invitation—My wounded child, return to my embrace, and recuperate your body."

With the fierce smile of a warrior, the goddess called out, at the side of the dragon.

With most of its neck hacked apart, the dying divine beast responded, dissolving its huge emerald body into light, which was absorbed by Athena.

Immediately after that, she raised a single hand, toward the heavens.

Suddenly, the surface of the sea in the Bay of Naples protruded upwards sharply.

The sand and grit in the sea rose up even higher, forming the shape of a gigantic serpent.

A serpent of sand.

There were not just one of them. The protrusions from the sea, numbering eight—Eight giant serpents had risen from the sea, looking down upon Perseus. Godou was reminded of the battle at Tokyo.

Then, Athena had also used similar giant serpents like these, as if to show off her power as a goddess of the land.

She had also shrouded the area in darkness.

Thick, pitch black air. To be engulfed by that would block out all light, which had caused the people of Tokyo to fall into great panic, thankfully, she only used a small amount this time...

"The snake of darkness and earth. This is going to be a little troublesome."

Perseus said.

However, his expression did not match his words. On his mouth, a knowing smile surfaced.

"Fortunately, I am well prepared for this... My tale from the ancient times, by the neck of the Gorgon I severed, I shall do it once again. Before me, all serpents are powerless."

As he said that, the eight serpents Athena had just created turned into dust.

The mist-like darkness also began to scatter, as if blown by a wind.

"Serpent-slaying words of power, is it? It seems like a power you had obtained after defeating a goddess with similar attributes to mine."

"If you would like me to do so, I could make an oath not to use this power in our battle. How about it?"

In response to the goddess' dangerous look, the hero lowered his head respectfully.

"Hmph, that would not be necessary. I will make you regret your audacity... Using those words of power, should have weakened your divine power. Though you have inherited the will of Zeus, back then in Greece, you had the blessing of the land for protection. That privilege which you do not have here!"

Hearing those angry words of Athena, Godou started to have doubts.

The words of power earlier, was it the same power as the [Sword]?

The image that Perseus had evoked with his sword and its effects, it seemed as though it had completely sealed all serpent-related divine powers.

In her anger and great desire to oppose Perseus, Athena's divine power swelled up explosively.

It was at a level where she no longer cared to test her opponent's strength, similar to what had transpired in Tokyo—perhaps even worse—This was bad.

Remembering the aftermath of their previous battle and panicking, Godou thought that he had to stop them no matter what.

"Wait, wait a second! Don't go all out in this sort of place! Stop!"

"Hm. I had been concerned earlier, but who are you? Not an ordinary human, it seems... A modern godslayer, are you not?"

Focusing his gaze on Godou, who had entered his field of vision , Perseus asked.

The one who answered was Athena instead.

"It is as you say. He is Kusanagi Godou. Though he is not yet ripe, still, he is a rather impressive brat... I'll say this first, but he is already my prey. It would be best if you remembered that well."

"Ho. To be spoken of like that by a god of your stature, not bad at all..."

As Perseus stared at him, squinting, Godou felt somewhat uneasy.

It is likely that he was being assessed.

Does this guy feel that fighting Athena won't be enough, and is considering me as well?

"Like I said, wait. If you two would like to duke it out, that's fine, but please don't fight in the city. You'll be a nuisance to the residents!"

"Some time ago, you expended all your might to engage me in battle in your own country, how ironic."

"With the circumstances then, I had no choice! At any rate, if you want to fight, do it somewhere else!"

"Young godslayer, your inclinations are simply too superficial. You are mistaken."

He had wanted to act as a mediator between the two divinities, but instead had been accused of being arrogant by Perseus.

For sure, this guy won't be making any proper suggestions. Godou could not help but frown, thinking that.

"Are you listening? The people desire the great efforts of a hero, and await the tales of my deeds. I, respecting their wishes, will fight for them, I will display all my valor. For this is the duty of a hero!"

"Don't use 'respecting the wishes of the people' so conveniently! Thick-skinned, aren't you?"

As expected, Perseus had said something that suited his own interests.

If they were to continue the conversation this way, it would definitely end in him asking the Campione—Kusanagi Godou—for a duel.

"Though you should already know this, you are also one of my enemies, young godslayer."

Looking at Godou who was attempting to deny reality, Perseus smiled.

A righteous hero he may be, yet he had a twisted desire for battle. He felt as if he had seen this before, to be exact, a few months back—the heretic god Verethragna had also been the same .

"Demon, rakshasa, fallen angel, godslayer... warriors that are branded as great abominations. You share many similar qualities as them, as a devil king, and with the heroes of steel, gods like me, between us we can only be eternal archenemies, to wage tempestuous war against. Us gods, born above the ground, and you humans, who have obtained the same standing as the gods, the chances for our paths to cross are frequent—our fates have already been decided in the eons past."

The hero of steel, saying that, startled Godou slightly.

It seemed like his Campione instincts were warning him—On the other hand, it could also be said that it was the excitement that could be felt before a deathmatch with archenemies.

"If you put it that way, that's how it is."

Athena murmured.

"Godslaying devil kings and the forces of the hero have always been in conflict since time immemorial... Hm. With that connecting destiny, it would be inevitable for them to meet again."

To say it was inevitable, or whatever other reasons, wasn't it obvious that it was all this goddess's fault... While complaining to himself, the goddess continued on.

"Very well. Shall we retreat this time round, hero of steel? I have just remembered that I had planned to train this boy well."

An inauspicious declaration.

To Godou who was holding his head with his hands, Athena issued an order like a queen.

"Kusanagi Godou, if you would like for the city to not get involved, then you will have to fight for it, as a King, to protect your own friends. This is indeed good training that the inexperienced you have to undertake."

"Fufu. To be able to exchange blows with both a godslayer and the queen of serpents, this is getting more and more exciting."

"Y-You guys, don't decide this at your own convenience..."

Why do the gods always turn out to be so willful and stubborn?

Godou cursed his own misfortune, and at the same time analyzed his surroundings calmly.

Athena was smiling provocatively, while Perseus wore an expression brimming with fighting spirit. Liliana Kranjcar was silently observing from the sides, looking worried.

How would he approach the fight with this hero from the myths? Godou could not come up with an idea.

Besides that, there was also the problem of location.

The castle that was built on the land formation reaching out towards the sea, the harbor, and even the streets leading to the city , they were far too close!

Right now, they were only about ten meters away from the pier, next to the streets, which looked rather prosperous.

No matter how they fought, they would likely cause damage to the environment, which Godou wanted to avoid.

"I don't mind playing along with you guys, but I have a request. I want to change the place for our duel. I can't fight in a place like this."

Godou said in an exasperated air.

He would not let himself be swept up in their pace. In addition to that, he would also have to make them comply with his conditions.

"Ho, are you unsatisfied with this place as our dueling grounds?"

"Of course I am."

"... Hmph. Although, at any rate, I don't feel that it is a big problem, no?"

Godou's firm insistence caused Perseus to inspect the surroundings carefully.

"In a sentimental and historical city, under the moonlight and gaze of a goddess, this is a decent stage for us to do battle on."

"It's terrible. Normally, before a duel, you have to make preparations for various things. If you ask me for a duel on the spot, as if I can get fired up!"

The ten forms of Verethragna, under these conditions, who knows which could be activated.

To fight without preparation, would be to be beaten one-sidedly , which is why he needed to buy time and come up with a plan.

Quickly making up his mind, Godou whispered to the female knight.

"... Sorry, but because of that, I will be leaving this place. If I'm not around, you should be safe, so take that opportunity to get away."

Originally he had intended to leave upon finishing those words, but Liliana also whispered her reply.

"... In other words, leaving this place for the present, wanting to prepare a counterattack?"

"Yes, that sounds about right. That guy is extremely fast on his feet, although I probably can't beat him in that aspect, for now, I can only try."

"In that case, then please leave it to me."

Suddenly, Liliana clung on him tightly.

Her slender body glued to his, embracing him, Godou's mind went blank in a fluster. *Did she fall into the sea*, her half-dried clothes giving off a scent of salt water.

He could feel the gentleness and warmth of the fairy-like, beautiful girl through their body contact—

The moment he had felt that, the silver-haired witch cried out.

"O' wings of Artemis, grant me the power to journey through the night and soar across the heavens!"

Was this an incantation—words to activate magical power?

Right after, Godou and Liliana were sent flying through the air.

"Eh?"

The view before his eyes suddenly became very vast.

The inner bay of Naples, the harbor stretching out to sea, the gigantic castle near the harbor, and many bright street lights...

Godou looked towards where he had stood moments ago.

The looks of Athena and Perseus, who had been left behind on the land.

"Eeeh!?"

As though attracted by some unseen magnet, Liliana and Godou moved through the skies, directly above the streets of Naples.

If someone were to look upwards, they would think that they saw a shooting star, but naturally, shooting stars will not be this close to the ground.

They continued to fly for about half a minute.

Slowing down, they descended, and gradually landed on the roof of a building. Though Godou had feared that the roof might give way under their weight, it was an unfounded fear.

Godou and Liliana landed on the roof softly, with the same flying posture.

And after, they slid forwards like a plane that had just touched down, and quickly came to a stop, a safe landing.

They had flew for a distance of about two or three kilometers.

Gazing at the seaside castle in the distance, Godou heaved a sigh of relief.

Part 3

Godou and Liliana returned to ground level from the rooftop.

High-rise buildings were usually rather rare in European cities, but this large metropolis of Italy was an exception, there were quite a few multi-storied buildings around.

The city at night before them, was indeed lively.

Although it was already late, there were still many stores still operating, restaurants, hotels, pubs, for example, even some of the boutiques and grocery stores have not closed shop yet.

There were many people going back and forth. The duo of a young male and female particularly stood out in the crowds...

"Could it be that this area is a popular night date spot?"

"Yes. The Santa Lucia district, even at night, is one of the safer areas in Naples."

Godou fully agreed with Liliana's answer.

Having just come from rural Sardinia, the scenery here felt dazzling.

"... At any rate, I didn't think that Liliana-san could fly."

Recalling how they had escaped, he remarked earnestly.

He had once asked Erica before whether she could use magic to fly, but she had answered with 'Not if it's me', sighing.

A magic which that genius could not use, but Liliana could—Godou felt a little surprised.

"It is my honor to be of service to you. The magical spell of flying is a secret art of us witches, have you not heard of it before? Of stories that mentioned witches flying in the sky on brooms?"

Liliana seemed somewhat proud, but Godou's attention was on a contradiction he realized.

"Eh? Erica is a witch too, but she had told me that she couldn't fly?"

"Strictly speaking, she is not a witch, but rather a female mage. A witch has to possess the disposition of a miko, to be able to receive the arts of the witch that are imparted... But, based on just her abilities, she could also be called a [Witch]."

Come to think of it, during that turmoil in June, they had introduced Liliana as a witch possessing the disposition of a miko.

I see, so it had that kind of meaning.

At any rate, it was thanks to Liliana that they could escape from that situation, Godou turned around and bowed his head.

"Anyway, thank you. If it weren't for your help... who knows how that would have turned out."

"To render a King their assistance is the duty of a knight, nothing that I did is worthy of your praise... But, why couldn't you have fought at that place?"

To the knight who had no clue of the current status, Godou wanted to whine about his troubles.

It seems that he had to do some explanations about the authorities of Verethragna, and just as he decided...

"Liliana-sama, you were here! Has the situation taken a turn for the worse like what we predicted!?"

From the crowds, appeared a short young girl.

She seemed to be similar to Shizuka in terms of age, wearing a half-sleeved maid uniform which suited her well, and appeared to be someone Liliana knew. As she came, she threw Godou a few looks of suspicion.

"Ah, sorry about that, making you search for me."

Liliana faced the young maid who had shown up all of a sudden calmly.

Godou suddenly thought of the magic art that could scry the location of people. If you had an object that belonged to the target, something like a strand of hair, as long as they were in the same city, you could roughly tell their current location.

Erica had occasionally used spells of this sort, that young girl must have done something similar.

"Karen, you should know who is he, shouldn't you? The Campione of Japan—Kusanagi Godou-sama. Remember your manners. Kusanagi Godou, this is my servant, Karen Jankulovski."

Liliana introduced them to each other.

From her hard-to-pronounce surname to a Japanese, she seems to be of East European lineage.

"... Kusanagi Godou-sama? Liliana-sama, weren't you together with Sir Salvatore earlier, did something happen?"

"Well, many things did. Many things that give me a headache whenever I think about them."

"By Sir Salvatore, did you mean Doni? Eh, did that guy come to Naples too?"

Things looked more complicated than he had thought.

As he headed to the hideout of the [Bronze-Black Cross], Godou listened to their report on the current situation in Naples.

...As expected, Salvatore Doni was an idiot who specialized in being a nuisance to others.

After hearing about the events that have transpired in Naples and making the above conclusion, Godou noticed that the person who had been controlling her pace and trailing them constantly—the young girl in the maid uniform—was grinning from ear to ear.

"Mm, it has already turned into such a crisis... But, unexpectedly, Liliana-sama is someone who should not be underestimated. The moment Sir Salvatore was gone, she had brought along yet another [King]—no, grew intimate with. Were you planning to take advantage of Erica-sama's absence?"

"K-Karen! Don't speculate about such weird things!"

Aah, this girl was a demon too, Godou thought, sympathizing with Liliana.

From the female maid's, Karen's smile, a shadow of a demon could be seen. It was such a cute smile, yet Godou found himself being unable to compliment it. It was, in a different way, a demonic personality like Erica's.

"A-Anyway, we have to quickly come up with a counterplan for the god Perseus. Kusanagi Godou, do your authorities have any sort of activation conditions? The words of power of the [Sword]—the ability you had used against Marquis Voban in Tokyo—what is required to use it?"

Liliana forcefully changed the topic.

"In order to use that, I have to have precise knowledge of the enemy's divine nature and aspects. The problem is, I have completely zero knowledge of those details in mythologies."

Of course, he still knew the story of Perseus.

Godou looked at his right hand. No, the [Sword] could not yet be felt, hence knowledge of that degree was insufficient.

"But, if I recall correctly, you should have used the [Sword] a few times, how did you satisfy the conditions then?"

"Erica used magic to impart all the knowledge to me, that spell named [Instruction]."

"Then it's simple, I too, have the ability to use that spell. In the place of Erica, let me, Liliana Kranjcar, complete the task!"

"No, about that, it's impossible... You know, magic has little to no effect on us Campiones."

This is bad. Godou started to get flustered.

If this goes on, he would have to explain how Erica had done it, he couldn't possibly do that!

"... There is a loophole in Kusanagi Godou-sama's words. We already know that magic has no effect on Campiones, so how exactly did she manage to use the spell [Instruction]?"

As expected, Karen had interjected.

Liliana was also awaiting Godou's answer with anticipation, did he really have to spell it out for them? This was like one of those penalty games.

"Erm, regarding that, in other words... Magic from external sources have no effect, but it is a different story if it's from the inside, something along the lines of 'oral insertion', but with magic ?"

"Oral... from the inside... ah, I see. That's what it was."

Liliana turned her head to the side, while Karen was hiding her laughter.

This girl was truly a demon, she had seen through him from the start, and turned the situation into a source of entertainment for her.

Ignoring Godou's woes, the female master turned towards her maid.

"What is it, Karen? I do not have a clue."

"Fufu, as expected of Liliana-sama, how innocent... It is exactly what he said, oral insertion. In other words, mouth to mouth. A passionate kiss between a man and a woman. Have you forgotten, that legend of a maiden who offered her body to the devil king Campione in order to cast sealing magic?"

"...Mouth to mouth? A passionate kiss?"

Liliana repeated softly, and blushed a deep red.

"I, I see. Then, that time at Tokyo, in front of me, with Erica—th-those actions had such a meaning behind it!?"

"Ah, wait, what? ...Yeah, well, that's how it is."

In actual fact, that was merely Erica fooling around, but she did not need to know that.

As it was embarrassing to say out loud, Godou merely nodded ambiguously. His answer had seemingly caused Liliana to realize a lot of things that were rushing into her head, and she was shaking slightly.

"That time—you were not even the slightest bit concerned that we were around you, urged on by your passion and impulse, as though you were alone with your lover, with the sound of a viola in the background, to hold each other intensely, that time, was *that*! "

Please don't use that kind of expression to describe it, although his inner self had really wanted to say it, he resisted the urge.

"Although I had already thought so then, I'll say it once more! You are too shameless! To engage in those acts right before me, that passionate kissing scene!"

Feeling deeply apologetic, Godou had been mistaken about her, he thought she had been empathizing with him.

"S-Sorry... Because it's that sort of thing, we can't do it this time round. Understood?"

"Y-Yes. I understand. As long as Erica is not here, we have no means of using that spell on you."

"Why can't we? I think it's an extremely easy solution to our problems."

And naturally, the person who interjected once again was Karen .

With that, she touched on the topic which the king and the master had been trying to avoid.

"Liliana-sama simply has to perform mouth to mouth on Kusanagi-sama, there is no problem with that, right?"

"No, there is a problem! For me and Liliana-san to do that, would be really bad!"

"Th, that's right. As a pure and chaste maiden, there's no way I can do that!"

Godou and Liliana retorted simultaneously.

However, Karen, like a stubborn child, continued on.

"Now is the time of crisis when the [Heretic God] has descended upon us. Both of you, as a Campione and as a knight, please do not underestimate the severity of the situation. Indeed, it is a terrible thing to trample over the purity of a maiden, but the disaster that will be caused by the god is even more unforgivable—Now, now, because of that Liliana-sama, please kiss !"

This girl, as I thought, is fully enjoying herself!

Godou was very sure of it, that while Karen was making suggestions with a serious face, but inside, she must be giggling looking at her master's troubled face.

However, the little devil maid's suggestion was the right choice —

Godou stole a glance at Liliana's face.

Panicked, troubled, and a little bit of anger, but the silver-haired girl definitely knew the truth of those words. She had to make up her mind. It was evident that her resolve was wavering, and her expression weakened.

—Godou suddenly felt the rush of power through his body.

An indicator that a [Heretic God] was near, he hurriedly checked his surroundings, and then immediately realized.

From the direction of the sea, on a pure white horse with large wings spread out wide from its back, rode the beautiful yet bold hero.

"Come to think of it, Perseus is also capable of flying."

Pegasus, the horse of the sky.

Legend speaks of a divine beast that can soar through the heavens, born from the blood of Medusa, as well as sandals that can grant its wearer flight... Godou recalled about the Greek myths of Perseus.

At any rate, this was quite the spectacular sight. It was overly showy.

The place they were currently at was a rather wide open plaza.

Many men and women liked to frolic around this area due to the snacks and beverage stalls that were concentrated around the area.

In the skies that were lit up by the bright lights of the streets, the pure white Pegasus gracefully approached.

The handsome man who was holding the reins put aside his sword at his waist, and then in his hands appeared a masterfully crafted wooden bow, a quiver on his back, his white cloak billowing with the wind. An extremely eye-catching appearance.

"Hahaha! There you are, godslayer, I've been searching for some time!"

The sound of Perseus' elated voice could be heard.

The people on the streets, raising their heads and seeing the flying man and horse, started to scream, causing a stir.

Watching the figure of the hero approach through the unfolding chaos and disorder, Godou grew incredibly nervous.

"Liliana-san, do you think we can escape from the Pegasus with what you used earlier!?"

".... To be honest, I think it will be difficult. If we are counting on the divine beast from the legends to be slower than our magic, it is overly optimistic of us."

An expected answer.

Godou readied himself, as it would be pointless to try and run away.

With nowhere to retreat, then there was only one option—Go forward.

"It seems there's no other way except to fight... I'll be going now. Should it become the worst case scenario, I leave the rest to you. At any rate, that bastard Doni should be fine, if it comes to that, find him and somehow have him fight it out with Perseus!"

Leaving Liliana and Karen with those words, Godou headed directly for Perseus.

Part 4

A handsome man of bizarre appearance.

As if made using CG, a Pegasus that could only have existed in movies.

Appearing in front of the residents of Naples, it caused a huge stir.

Some, upon seeing that, wanted to flee, others thought that it was some sort of performance, and there were also people who began to panic—At any rate, it was pure chaos.

But most of the people were here to watch.

Wanting to know what will unfold next, for the time being...

Dismounting from the Pegasus, the handsome man, and an Asian boy that walked out from the crowds.

In the night, in the plaza, the crowds surrounded the two of them, waiting for something to happen in anticipation.

Ever since he became a Campione, this was the first time that he had to fight in front of such a huge audience.

Wanting to minimize the amount of casualties, Godou asked without expecting a favorable answer.

"Hey, if it's fine with you, I would like to change the location for our battle, is that ok?"

"No can do. If we change the location now, it will ruin the mood ."

Flat out rejecting Godou, Perseus smiled, his eyes narrowing.

"It has been a while since I've materialized in this world, and the human world has flourished greatly. To me, this has made my want to have our duel here even greater. To have such a glorious and elaborate setting for our duel, in those mythological times was impossible!"

As he listened to the hero's speech, Godou began an analysis of Perseus.

It was obvious to anyone that he was a full-blown narcissist. In spite of that, even having the appearance of a pretty boy, his intentions were not simply just to draw attention to himself.

Only someone who had experienced the reality of the battlefield , fighting for their life, would be able to possess such a degree of confidence.

His [Individuality] was an intense presence, that even the smallest of his actions drew the attention of others.

Whether that was good or bad, undoubtedly he had the abilities and power worthy of the term 'hero'. As Godou continued his analysis, Perseus started to make his move.

He placed the bow he was holding on his back, drew his sword from his waist—

And then he was right in front of Godou, closing the distance instantly.

There were no excessive or complicated movements, he merely moved in a straight line, and simply swung his sword.

However, it was incredibly fast. Godou instantly jumped towards the side.

Perseus followed him closely, and threw out yet another quick slash.

Godou barely managed to evade it, almost falling down in the process.

Without even considering a counterattack, he was fully focused on dodging in his desperation. Kusanagi Godou, facing a warrior of such combat prowess and having nil martial arts background, had no other options.

With such unrefined and forced evasive maneuvers, Godou finally lost his balance, falling down on the floor.

Perseus immediately pressed his advantage with a ferocious swing of his blade.

Almost like the speed and flexibility of a white panther. Godou managed to escape by rolling aside, but doing mat exercise-like movements on the stone paving hurt quite a fair bit. Be that as it may, it was infinitely preferable to being cut into two.

"Hmph, this will not do. Although most godslayers usually have the bad habit of a 'disregard for one's appearance', you should not be one of those types? This simply will not do, to stand as a monarch above other men, you have to fight with an elegance and dignity of a king."

"If I had enough room to do that, I would have!"

Perseus seemed as though he were playing chess, and pointing out the wrong moves to his opponent, and Godou was the person shouting angrily at his opponent who was not even breaking a sweat. Finally, he stood up.

Just as he thought, melee combat was unfavorable to him, and using the [Raptor] to escape was not feasible either.

Perseus had not even used those techniques he had utilized against the dragon earlier. Not just the speed of a white panther, but that of a white shooting star. The speed of the [Raptor] could not even be compared with that.

But, as for other methods of escape... there were some possibilities.

Thinking of that method, Godou started to grow doubtful, if he were to use it, a large part of Naples' history and cultural assets would be destroyed, which was definitely not good.

As he was thinking, Perseus thrust his sword forward once more.

I'm almost at my limits, can I still go on? Godou stared at Perseus, and just as he realized there was no escaping the blade—

A girl, with her hair of silver tied into a ponytail, barged onto the scene.

Wearing a blue shirt, coupled with a black-striped cloak—a battle dress of blue and black—and carrying a long and beautiful sword. She was Liliana Kranjcar, without a doubt.

"I'll be your second, Kusanagi Godou!"[15]

As she said that, Liliana caught Perseus' sword with her own.

No, she deflected it. Liliana took the resolute, determined attack with her saber held at a slight angle. Given the mass of Perseus' sword, it would not be surprising if her blade had snapped under the weight.

However, Perseus' sword slid off that slight angle of Liliana's blade, and—

His sword cut only air, before being embedded on the stone pavement.

"A fitting blade for the hand of a graceful maiden you have there, young lady. For the sake of that godslayer, do you intend on crossing swords with me?"

"Yes. Insolent it may be, but I will have the dragon-slayer, you, accept my challenge."

A smile of ease appeared on Perseus' countenance and he pulled his sword out from the ground.

On the other hand, Liliana Kranjcar displayed a difficult expression, strained with determination.

The knight in blue lifted her saber, pointing it at the hero's forehead as she stood in front of Godou to protect him, ready to attack at any moment

"Stop it, Liliana-san! I am this guy's opponent, so step back!"

"I cannot obey that order! Although I have no intention of taking the place of that obscene Erika to serve as your lover, l, as a knight, am in no way inferior to her. With my valor, I will make up for my previous failure!"

Even if you are a knight, there's no need to go this far, was what Godou would have liked to say, but he kept it to himself.

Perseus smiled wryly as he slashed towards Liliana. Like a wild beast playing with its prey, it was a light-hearted attack.

"Well said, young maiden! In the face of a god, yet be able to challenge him without faltering. That's an impressive spirit!"

Swift, decisive and versatile.

Perseus' continuous chain of attacks were the embodiment of the above style.

No matter whether it was a fast, a heavy or a strong blow, Liliana desperately deflected all of them.

Although she was a knight on the same level as Erika, to take on a god, was too arduous a task. As Perseus was not taking it seriously, she could barely keep up.

To be able to challenge a god on even footing, one must first have power on par with the god's.

An exploit like that, could only be done by someone like Salvatore Doni—The [King of Swords]. As someone who had far exceeded the limits of the human body, no matter how much of a genius you were, to match up to him was not something a single knight could accomplish.

She understood that fact all too well, but had still become a shield for him.

In this instance, Godou flung aside all his doubts and fears. *I'll worry about that later, for now I'll have to grab that bastard hero's attention, and create an opening for Liliana to escape from danger!*

"Thus speaketh Lord Mithra. The sinful shall be met with justice ."

Godou chanted, words he had not spoken for a while, spell words of conviction.

These were the words of power that summoned *that*, the pitch-black, ferocious, and most aggressive out of the ten forms.

"May spines be crushed, may bones be broken, tendons torn; hair, brains, and blood mingled and trampled together with the earth! The one unblunted and unapproachable! Oath-breaking sinners be purged by the iron hammer of justice!"

Where Godou had just been standing—the plain stone floor started to turn into a shade of black.

A distortion in the space had opened, that which linked this world to the 'imaginary' world, and right after, a black form began expanding out on the ground of the plaza.

"Hm? Finally gotten serious, have you, godslayer? This is your authority, isn't it?!"

"Kusanagi Godou, what on earth is that form—!?"

Perseus seemed overjoyed, while Liliana looked on wide-eyed, and then Godou liberated the fifth form of Verethragna.

"Come forth, [Boar]! Listen well to my commands today!"

The black floor was the clearest indicator that this world had been connected to the 'imaginary' world.

And then, it came, the fiercest form, the [Boar] emerging from the ground.

First, the fur.

From the area around Godou and Liliana, and then all the way to where Perseus was standing, was black fur.

The fur was unexpectedly fine and glossy, it was exquisite. There was also none of the odor or stench usually present on wild beasts, this was how the divine beast could be described.

From the tip of its snout to its rear, it measured about twenty meters.

From where Godou was, on top of it, he could not see its entire form, but any onlookers who could see the full terrifying, massive and ferocious form of the [Boar]—most likely would have been scared witless by its savage visage.

Most likely the people watching were looking upwards now.

Standing on top of the giant beast's back, Godou slowly rose up into the air, like an escalator, the beast slowly lifting his body up.

The [Boar] that had emerged from the land, finally could be seen in all its glory.

Godou now had a bird's eye view of the city, as though he were on a rooftop.

The Santa Lucia district directly in front of the Bay of Naples.

It was commonly known that, from the history of this area, there was a royal palace that the King of Naples had once lived in, which has become a standard sightseeing spot. The folk song [Santa Lucia] had originated from that place.

Godou and the [Boar]'s line of sight were fixated past the coast.

That was the area they had been at earlier, the harbor of Santa Lucia.

Further out into the sea on the protruded land, stood a castle of stone. (Also known as [Egg Castle])

When Kusanagi Godou thought about destroying a large object, he would be able to summon the [Boar].

In other words, he had designated that castle as the target.

No matter how you looked at it, the castle was the most fitting target, it simply stood out too much, regardless of whether you saw it from the sea or from the harbor, it could be clearly seen, and also left a deep impression.

RRUOOOOOOOOOO!!

The [Boar] which was destruction incarnate, roared out into the night in Naples.

"That's an interesting thing you called out, godslayer! But, what are you planning on? You cannot defeat me with merely that!"

"Like this! Liliana-san, hold on tight and don't fall off!"

Godou shouted at both the hero and the female knight standing atop the fur.

And at the same time, the [Boar] kicked off hard against the ground.

It charged towards the castle—No, to be precise, it jumped.

The ground shook with every step, the stone pavement cracking every time its hoof landed. The target was the castle beside the sea, if it charged towards that, there would be widespread destruction, hence the jumping.

Fortunately the castle's surrounding area was the harbor and pier, hence there was plenty of space.

"Kyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa!?"

"Mgh, this is—!"

Liliana had let out a surprisingly cute scream, while Perseus was impressed.

But the fact that both of them were not thrown off the [Boar] was indeed praiseworthy.

Standing on the normally not-very-stable back of the gigantic monster, which had leapt off the ground, even under these difficult conditions, Liliana still clung on to the black fur for dear life, though she had already fallen down.

If it were Erica, she would have thought of something, somehow.

The knight who was equal to Erica would probably be the same, and Liliana did not betray his expectations.

On the other side, Perseus was relying on his superb sense of balance to stand firm.

Although his body was swaying, he did not fall over, as expected of a god. A being of a completely different dimension compared to humans, and in contrast, Godou was on his knees, his hands grabbing on to the black fur.

"Well, I didn't think that I could have thrown you off that easily. .."

Speaking in a low voice, Godou started to move.

On all fours, on the back of the [Boar], Godou shifted into a riding position, like a wild beast.

When he had summoned the beast, for some reason his own body had also gained the charging power of the boar. Also, the jumping movement of the [Boar] was also a result of being telepathically manipulated by Godou. (Of course, it would not have been possible if the [Boar] resisted)

... Could it be that this guy, was not like one of those [Summoned Beasts] from a video game, but rather an offshoot of me? That seemed like a rather dangerous relationship, as Godou's mind and body were overly linked to it, at times. That would mean that it were a personification of his destructive tendencies. It was a rather ominous premonition.

Leaving that fact aside, Godou, like a beast, dashed forwards on all fours.

His target was obviously Perseus.

The footing was poor as the body of the beast was constantly quaking from when it jumped, it was worse than riding a rampaging horse.

To be able to maintain your balance in these unfavorable conditions, was certainly an admirable feat, but purposely standing on two legs in such a situation would not be wise.

With the stance of a boar, Godou charged at Perseus, preparing to grab him by the legs in a tackle.

If he attempted this on flat ground, it would mostly likely be evaded by Perseus.

However, this was no flat ground. On this unpredictable field, the hero who cared about his appearance and hence would not go down on all fours could only stand firm against Godou's unsightly assault.

Very quickly, Perseus was knocked off his feet, and fell off the back of the boar.

Although something of this extent would not be enough to defeat him, but it was a way to buy some time.

"Ku—!"

The body of the hero flailed through the air as he fell.

Simultaneously, a tremendous impact could be felt from the pitch-black back of the boar, the tremors spreading through its body. The [Boar] had landed on the ground.

From the plaza where it had been summoned to the harbor was about a few hundred meters in a direct line, and it had crossed that entire distance in one jump. Though it had such a massive body, it possessed such incredible jumping power.

"Wait! There's no need to do anything more! Return to where you came from!"

Godou hurriedly commanded the [Boar] which was fiercely charging towards the castle.

The boar stopped.

The beast growled in a low voice, retreating a few steps, stomping on the ground, as if in defiance of Godou's order to stop. It seemed to be resisting, shockwaves could be felt from its back due to its movements—This was bad.

Priceless historical buildings were going to be destroyed again, at this rate.

Godou concentrated and issued a 'disappear already!' command telepathically, but the [Boar] did not cease its growling.

Just when he felt despaired and powerless.

"—Kusanagi Godou, please take note! Perseus has returned!"

The warning from Liliana reached his ears, and Godou turned his head around, frantically searching for the enemy's location.

"You have my praise, just this time. Though it was neither graceful nor stylish, your attack was still successful. That, I acknowledge."

Speaking with eloquence, Perseus was riding upon the white winged horse—Pegasus. It seemed like he was caught by the white horse after he fell off the [Boar].

And then, as he rode upon Pegasus, Godou noticed a few rings on his back had been shining.

The lights were like the golden rays of the sun, to Godou, it seemed as though Perseus had his back to the sun.

Godou then realized.

What had stopped the [Boar] from charging on, was not his order, but the unimaginable strength of the divine energies emitted by those rings. *What is this? What kind of power is this?*

"The power you had usurped, was it from a war god of victory? My distant comrade, by one that came from the east... Truly unlucky."

Perseus spoke in a voice filled with pity, and the rings began to shine brighter.

"My ancestors, the light of the east, grant me power—in your name I request this miracle. By the oath of the serpent-slaying warrior, now is the time to grant me this strength!"

In response to these words of power, the rings shone with even greater intensity.

Like the blazing sun that illuminated the sky and the land, it was a very warm, gentle light. The [Boar] began to growl as the light rays fell upon it.

—Rrrooooooooooo......

Doesn't seem like its usual self. This was the first time Godou had heard it produce such a sound. Seemed almost as though it was howling.

"Wh, what is that?"

Godou murmured in shock.

The surface supporting his weight disappeared, and Godou felt the sensation of free-fall.

The power of the ferocious [Boar] had totally vanished—Godou fully realized this fact.

"Wings of the witch, grant me the power of flight!"

The one who had swiftly chanted the spell words was Liliana.

Falling along with Godou, she had immediately recited the incantation to obtain flight capabilities.

Like a glider gliding through the sky, she quickly changed directions and headed straight for Godou, then grabbing on to his body tightly, and finally descending slowly towards the ground.

They were almost at ground level.

Though they had avoided the impact of falling, they could not prevent falling during their landing.

"O, ouch.... thanks for saving me, Liliana-san. I almost fell to my death."

"Kusanagi Godou, earlier, just what was that power Perseus had used...?"

"Not a clue. All I know is that he had fully sealed my authority."

The serpent-slaying words of power had sealed the power of Athena.

That was understandable as Perseus had defeated Medusa, who was of the same being as Athena, and the hero who had decapitated her, and this myth served as the origin for Perseus' power to seal the goddess of serpents.

However, to seal Verethragna's—the Persian war god's—powers, how did that happen?

But first, they had to fix their posture.

Godou and Liliana stood up, albeit painfully, they had hit the floor of the harbor in an undignified heap, rolling a few rounds, their bodies covered with bruises.

And right then, in front of them, was Perseus on his winged horse, hovering in the air, with his bow ready.

A single arrow was fired.

Like a flash of lightning from the heavens, the arrow planted itself into the ground near Godou's foot.

And it exploded. The arrow blew up like a bomb, creating a shockwave. Godou and Liliana were flung aside violently. Were that a real bomb, they would probably be dead.

When Godou could finally pick himself up off the ground, the second arrow came.

The target was not the ground near his foot this time, it was aimed directly at his head. Godou sensed the incoming danger, and instantaneously activated the [Raptor]. Besides this form, there were no other viable options.

Hastened, he felt the world around him slow down.

The trigger for the [Raptor] form was a high-speed attack, and it granted the user superhuman speed and a lightweight body. A speed that exceeded the arrow, evading death.

However, as Perseus was about to fire his third arrow—

The rings on his back began to shine, and the speed of the [Raptor] form began to fade.

With only his normal mobility remaining, Kusanagi Godou could not dodge the incoming arrow. It struck dead center, in the middle of his chest, near the area of his heart.

—His strength had vanished. To the Campione, this was the first time it had happened.

As his consciousness started to grow thin, he desperately activated the last form, hoping that Perseus would not notice this last-ditch attempt to hang on to life, and then he thought of Liliana .... worried for the girl's safety...

And with that last thought, Godou lost consciousness.

Part 5

There were no forms that could be used to fight Perseus.

For example, the pitch-black [Boar] that Kusanagi Godou had summoned.

That was a fearsome summoning art, something that even if a highly skilled mage had tried for a hundred days straight, would not be able to summon such a divine beast. And he had only used ten seconds to do that.

This was a powerful authority possessed by a devil king Campione.

However, Perseus had used some divine secret technique, sealing the divine beast.

And then finally, shot Kusanagi Godou dead.

—*This was all my fault.* Liliana Kranjcar who witnessed the entire fight from the start could only look on, horrified, as the dead body of the Campione had collapsed on the ground.

If only she had used the spell, [Instruction], on him...

If he could have used the spell words of the [Sword] that even suppressed the Marquis Voban, the fight would definitely have turned out differently.

Because of her indecisiveness, someone had died. And it was someone who fought against the gods for the sake of mankind—a savior of the world, a bringer of discord, one of the devil kings.

Magi hailed the Campiones as [King] for a reason.

The main reason was fear, but besides that, when the [Heretic Gods] brought suffering and disaster to mankind, they were mankind's last bastion of defense, the only saviors of the world.

That was how it should have been, but she had done nothing but caused his death—!

"... Hm. I am feeling a strange unease."

Ignoring the currently despairing Liliana, Perseus had a troubled expression

"I should have just defeated this young godslayer, but I do not feel the sense of elation that comes after victory. Did I make a mistake somewhere—Such a detestable premonition. Why is that?"

Walking towards the body of Kusanagi Godou, he spoke in a low voice.

Does he plan to desecrate his body? Could a hero be capable of such a hideous act—perhaps he would really do it. In those ancient times, warriors had sometimes beheaded their fallen enemies, which had happened surprisingly often.

At the very least, she had to protect the body of the [King].

Her mind made up, Liliana picked up Il Maestro, but Perseus ignored her, continuing on his path towards Godou.

—And immediately, Perseus fell over.

Liliana witnessed it.

In the Santa Lucia harbor, barely illuminated by the street lights , the shadow of a hero.

A figure of a young girl appeared from the darkness, in her hands a huge sickle, with a blade of pure black. This was Athena, her form swathed in darkness, and the sickle in her hands had cleaved into the hero's back.

Perseus' response was also perfect.

Although it was an attack from the back, he had executed a forward roll reflexively, preventing a fatal wound.

However, it was still a severe wound, his blood flowing freely as he jumped back. His beautiful visage had turned into a grimace of pain.

"You, as Athena, I never thought you'd be capable of such underhanded tricks!"

"As I thought, when the hero has finished the godslayer off, he would then relax his guard—Fufu, admittedly, I may have violated the rules of a duel, but I will spare your life this once. Have I not said it before? That I will only retreat for a short while, and that he was my prey to hunt... which you have not yet slain."

Athena snickered while saying that.

Perseus nodded furiously.

"I see. In other words, the boy has not been defeated yet... Even so, attacking me from the back in jest is simply too harsh."

"Do you think you have the right to be saying that? Doing things in jest, isn't that you instead?"

Terrible, that would be the word used by humans to describe Athena's smile then.

Perseus' smile was a strained and bitter one.

"Ugh, I'll have to give it to you this time. May I ask if you have cooled off a bit?"

"Of course. If you will withdraw now, I will spare you. How does that sound?"

Perseus shrugged his shoulders at Athena's suggestion.

"I cannot comply with that."

"If that's the case, then you leave me no choice. I will strike you down!"

"You intend on striking me, the one who possesses the serpent-slaying words of power, down? Fufu, I already have an idea of why you would want me to withdraw."

"What do you mean by that? I do not understand."

"Taking into account your intention to stall for time, and my current wounded body, in order to benefit the both of us, why don't we both retreat for now?"

".... Hm. That's fine with me. Until you have recovered, I'll comply with that."

"You have my gratitude. Then, when the Campione is fully healed, we will meet once again on the battlefield."

Hearing Perseus' words, Athena raised her brows.

"You intend on fighting this guy again?"

"Can't I? It is a rare chance for me to fight a godslayer and the Queen of Serpents both simultaneously. It may be somewhat thick-skinned and shameless of me to say so, but when there is such an opportunity in front of me, I will definitely not let it slip away."

He smiled, unabashed, even as Athena stared at him dangerously.

Hmph. With a strained expression, Athena lightly nodded.

—What's going on? Liliana was thoroughly confused.

The situation had developed in an unexpected way. With Athena holding her sickle, Perseus wielding his magnificent sword , and Godou who had perished in battle, she had expected the two gods to be clashing with each other in combat.

Were they saying that the young King had not yet perished?

Why did Athena immediately stop her attack? She had already given Perseus such a terrible wound, wouldn't it be more advantageous for her to press on the attack—

"The time of battle, we shall decide some other time—Until then !"

Mounting his beloved horse that came at his whistle, Perseus bid them farewell. Even though the wound had not yet closed, he could no longer feel the pain.

Pegasus galloped, rather, flew towards the sea at night.

"—Well then, I leave Kusanagi Godou in your care, girl. He should be awakening soon. Ah, and also, make sure to duly prepare him for Perseus.... I will be the only one to defeat him, should he perish in battle before then, I will definitely never forgive him!"

Leaving those words behind, Athena departed.

The ordeal of Liliana Kranjcar and Kusanagi Godou, who was lying on the ground as though he were truly dead, was nowhere close to being over.

Chapter 4 - The Man from the East

Part 1

Between the Italian Peninsula, shaped like a long boot, and the island of Sardinia in the west was a vast area of ocean. This area could be considered as part of the Tyrrhenian Sea.

One of the types of vessels that frequented these waters was, for example, ferries. These ferries went to places like Genoa, Palermo, Naples and Cagliari in circumnavigation. There were also many yachts used for cruising.

Because the natural resources of the sea were abundant, naturally there would be fishing boats.

In the early dawn, before sunrise, the catch obtained from the fishing nets that were cast in the sea would be filled with many varieties of fish. However, in the midst of a school of unmatured Pacific Bluefin tuna, there was one lone human caught there.

...Having drifted for god knows how long in the Tyrrhenian Sea , being swept here all the way from Naples, but was still energetic and in high spirits, if you would like to describe that life form as still being human, that would be perfectly fine.

Untangling himself from the fishing net full of Pacific Bluefin tuna, he climbed up onto the boat.

Making himself at home without any permission, he sat down on the fishing boat, and said to the dumbfounded fishermen, "Fuu, I almost thought I was done for this time. Ah, would you mind giving me the direction to the nearest land from here? It's fine, I'm really good at swimming. Eh—You'll lend me a boat? Sorry for troubling you—I see I see, which region is this ocean in again? Sardinia? That's just great. Seems like things are going to get more interesting!"

From the time when Kusanagi Godou had vanished without a trace, one night had passed.

It was around nine plus in the morning when this was discovered, as Arianna was worried when she found that he was not in his room, and subsequently searched the whole villa, confirming that he was indeed not around.

"What happened to Godou-san? Could he have gotten into an accident?"

"Hmmm, maybe I went a little overboard with my jokes—"

In the rented villa on Sardinia, the girls were having a meeting in the living room. Yuri was pacing around the room in distress, and on her face was a look of worry.

On the contrary, Erica was not particularly worried about it.

That blockhead must have accumulated too much stress living in this female dormitory-like environment, and thus decided to run away, it should be enough if we let him relax for a few days.

He was asking for Genaro Gantz' contact information yesterday, there's a possibility he's already at his house by now.

Thinking that everything was within her calculations, Erica's attitude was calm and composed.

After telling Arianna that there was no need to worry, she asked her for an espresso.

"Yuri, didn't I say it before? Godou is a delicate person inside, even though he's like that, and because of that he needs some time to himself occasionally. And thus, we'll leave him alone for the time being. Afterwards, pulling him by the ears and bringing him back would be much more effective. Anyway, he's someone who can survive wherever he goes, there's no need to worry about him. "

She said in a rather indifferent manner, to the Hime-Miko who could not calm down.

As she would someday become the wife of the [King], staying by his side, worrying over this sort of thing was not necessary.

"Is, is that so..."

"Although the person himself has no self-awareness, his true personality is still somewhat haphazard. Conversely, that is why I can say that it's fine if we aren't overprotective of him."

"I can understand what Erica-san is trying to say, but..."

Yuri was very worried, and at this moment Erica had started to feel a slight bit of unease.

"There is a strange throbbing within my heart, as though he was dragged into something dangerous, it is a dark premonition."

Mariya Yuri was a spirit vision user of the strongest disposition.

Among Erica's friends that were of the same age group, Yuri was one of the few that were acknowledged by her to possess talent of equal standing. As for the others, they included Liliana Kranjcar of the [Bronze-Black Cross], and also that young master of the 'Hong Kong Lu House'. Besides these few there were no others.

As a result, this girl's senses and predictions must be taken seriously.

Halfway through the conversation, Erica's phone began to ring.

The [Diavolo Rosso] staring at the electronic display was shocked to see that it was the Great Knight Andrea Rivera, [The King's Butler].

Someone who never ceased to worry about various things, and also one of the few people that Erica felt sympathetic about.

"It's been a while, Sir Andrea. This time, is it good news or bad news that you are bringing?"

"Miss Erica, I don't recall ever bringing you any good news. This time is no exception—Around midnight yesterday, a [Heretic God] had manifested in Naples, and coincidentally your master, Kusanagi Godou, was at the scene. Did you know about this?"

"I did not. Around ten plus yesterday night, he was still here with us."

"Then, there is a possibility that he had used some other means of transport other than a boat or plane to cross the seas from Sardinia. He had confronted the god in Naples, and was subsequently defeated. I do not know the exact details of the situation, but his life is not in danger, that wraps up the current status. Actually, that was not the main topic I had wanted to discuss."

"Th-Then, what is it?"

"Please be on your guard, there is danger lurking just around the corner, near you. I cannot say what exactly, because it is simply too embarrassing. I had not wanted to say this, but I have no other choice..."

"Sir Andrea, are you currently in Naples now?"

"No... I'm at Sardinia. Because of some matters, I had to come here. That is... Mgh! You bastard, you managed to follow me here! Gffgh!?"

Beep... beep... beep... beep...

After hearing some yelling at the end, nothing more could be heard. The call was disconnected.

Andrea Rivera had been attacked by some unknown assailant—It seemed as though he had been struck down. Being one the Great Knights, with strength that rivaled Erica Blandelli, to be defeated this easily!

"... U-Um, did something serious happen?"

"A [Heretic God] has manifested in Naples. Our King, for some reason, was there, and engaged it in combat. However, it seems that the worst case scenario had happened..."

Erica replied, to Yuri who had asked out of concern.

And then, Andrea Rivera's warning and defeat. He had said that danger was lurking around the corner.

What on earth was going on?

She needed to gather more information, and come up with the next course of action, and especially find out about Godou's current condition. To be defeated, but not be dead, did he use the authority of the [Ram]?

She had to expend all her connections, and obtain information at all costs.

Just as she had started to do so, she realized that her phone did not respond. Was it out of power?

There should have been enough battery, it was strange.

"Ara? Arara? ...What's going on?"

The maid uniform-wearing Arianna Hayama Arialdi walked out of the kitchen.

She should not have known the current situation, and had a look of confusion on her face.

"What is it, Arianna? Is something wrong?"

"About that, Erica-sama, the gas has been cut, and as I was preparing lunch with the stove, the fire had stopped all of a sudden..."

"—Who's the one who turned off the circuit breaker!?"

There was yet another victim, and she rushed into the living room.

With a gorgeous body that surpassed those of sexy celebrities, wearing a thin, silky nightie and gripping a pillow under her arm, she was Lucretia Zola. It looked as if she had been in the middle of her nap.

Her usual laziness had disappeared, and Lucretia seemed a bit agitated.

"How am I supposed to nap in this kind of hot weather if the air-conditioner is turned off! Even the fridge is out of power! I won't be able to enjoy the beer that I had kept there if it's not icy cold! Seriously, my comfortable vacation will be ruined at this rate! "

If Godou were to hear this, he would have made some common sense comments, saying that she was overly self-indulgent.

Erica continued to observe the current occurrences.

She winked at Yuri, and the nodding Hime-Miko picked up the television remote, and pressed a few buttons. There was absolutely no response from the television.

They confirmed that all of their cellphones were not working, and could not be turned on.

Walking outside, they tested Erica's newly bought car.

The engine would not turn on, and neither would the torchlight they kept at the doorway.

It was not merely a simple blackout and a gas leak, it seemed.

"It seems that we would not be able to lead a civilized life in the area around this house. Electronic devices, machines are all non-functional. Yuri, can you feel anything?"

"...Perhaps it is a wide-range phenomenon that has even affected this area, I think. But, I cannot sense what is at the core of this... Could it be possible that a [Heretic God] has manifested nearby?"

Erica frowned, listening to Yuri, who was explaining with a serious expression.

She had to find out who or what was behind this incident, fast. And immediately after, hurry to Kusanagi Godou's side, who was in Naples. Erica sprung into immediate action.

As Erica began to move, on the other side—

In a swimming area of the beach not too far from their villa, a fierce argument was taking place.

"In the first place, you asshole, it doesn't even make sense to be swimming here all the way from the mainland!"

"It's not like I wanted to swim here. I got washed away by the waves, and I don't even know when I managed to arrive. It was such a rare opportunity to be able to play with Godou, it's regrettable that I ended up at the wrong place."

He said, to the person who had been tied up by rope, while opening a small icebox, which contained crushed ice and a dozen cans of beer. Although Italians gave the impression that they liked to drink red wine and similar alcoholic drinks, their consumption of beer was surprisingly high.

He pulled open the tab, and gulped an entire can in one go. Puhaa!

"... Ungh, it feels so great having a can after a swim. Fufufu, fridges don't work at the moment, so these cold drinks are rather valuable now—Andrea, do you want some too?"

"Who the hell wants to drink, you sorry excuse of a human, a piece of breathing industrial garbage! What are you going to do about that incident in Naples!?"

"There shouldn't be any problem with it, nope. Since Godou is already there, then I'll just leave things to him. My job now is to stop those girls from going there to help him—If he can make it out of this grueling ordeal on his own, he'll improve even faster!"

Surrounded by pine trees, it was a small yet beautiful beach.

Enjoying the scenery of the beach, holding a can of cold beer in one hand, bathing in the sunlight, and the azure color before your eyes—a marine blue sea that stretched endlessly.

Of course, the one enjoying his much anticipated vacation was a youth, Salvatore Doni.

Part 2

Kusanagi Godou found himself in some unknown space.

This place was nowhere, a place that did not exist on Earth, nor reality.

It was a world of grey. It was grey as far as the eye could see.

However, there was something else in this world of grey.

"...To be able to meet properly like this, it has been quite some time."

There was a girl in front of him.

She looked about fifteen. Well-proportioned features. A slim figure. If one were to compare her with the styles of Lucretia Zola or Erica Blandelli, one might say that she was of the more 'slender' type.

Regardless, she was alluring.

She could be described as beautiful, but also, she had a very cute, doll-like face and figure. Her pink hair was split to the left and right, and was wearing a thin white dress.

With her diminutive stature, she gave off the impression of a child. However, in contrast, she gave off a glamorous feel of a [Lady], more than any other girl that Godou knew.

He did not know who she was initially, but had recalled in an instant. Indeed, she was...

"...Pandora-san, am I right?"

"Still the same old reserved way of addressing me, eh—Even though it'd be fine if you called me 'Mama'..."

Her frivolous manner of speech made it seem as though she had attached a heart-shaped symbol at the end of her sentence.

Having pure Japanese DNA in his body, Godou could not accept that suggestion, so he ignored it for now. His questions began to pile up.

The couple who had given birth to the devil king Campiones, the immortal Epimetheus and his wife, Pandora.

She was the latter, obviously.

"Every meeting of ours seems so surreal, although I'm not sure why, I always forget that we've met, afterwards."

"Hmm, saying things so bluntly, maybe your level isn't high enough?"

With the solemnity of a goddess (tentatively), she said that.

"With continuous purification of the soul, then attaining enlightenment, that is the level you will need to be to remember the things that happen in this space. Those who are able to reach that state, usually don't become godslayers, so I guess it's pretty much impossible."

"...Haa. Then, is this the boundary between life and death?"

Faint, hazy memories floated through his mind. Those must have been information that were taken in before.

Hearing Godou's question, Pandora nodded, smiling. It was such a wide and cheerful smile, the smile of a normal girl that could be found anywhere.

"Correct. The world of idea, as the ancient Greeks would say. For the Persians, 'menog'. As you have already died once, your link with the real world has become thin, which is why you have found your way here."

"Before my death, I should have used the power of the [Ram]..."

"That's correct, your physical body is recovering smoothly now. In actual fact, before you revived, you had surely died once, you know. Didn't you notice?"

"Maybe. But I'm starting to doubt that's the case..."

If it were possible, Godou would have liked to never remember that kind of information, murmuring to himself.

Is that so? Am I going to resurrect after I die? What a haphazard body I have.

"Isn't it fine? It was because of that that you were able to come to this realm and meet me. Although I can materialize in the physical world, it's really troublesome to return to this place. Which brings us to the birth of godslayers! I don't come out unless it's a situation like that, recently."

"Haa... Then, what's the special occasion?"

Although she was like that, she was a supporter to Campiones. A patroness, so to speak.

Normally, she would not appear for no special reason.

"I called you out in order to give you a warning. You've encountered the divine attribute of 《Steel, right?"

"Steel... You mean Perseus?"

"Yep, that. That hero, he is a villain... no, a trickster, so be careful around him! Anyway, because you are rivals with those guys of 《Steel, losing to them is a definitely no-no!"

"Is your warning just that?"

If you could win just because someone told you not to lose, then life wouldn't be so full of hardships. Looking at Godou who was scratching his head, Pandora shook her head.

"No, that's not it. Leaving aside the other godslayers, because you were born at the ends of the east, I'm specially telling you this. On the island where Godō[16] lives, sleeps the strongest 《Steel, so you have to be careful, for the time being. Understand?"

"Strongest?"

"Yes, the strongest. Although the hero you are fighting now is also strong, that person is even stronger."

"...Why would that kind of person be in Japan?"

"Because, that is the end of the east—Beyond that lies only sea, in other words. There are many things that have been swept there, heaped up there... perhaps it might be fine, seeing as that has already been sleeping for so long."

"Regarding that, could you please elaborate further?"

"Sorry, no can do. We stand at the side of the gods, after all, so I can't tell you any more than that. This is the pact that we have with this world, rules that we absolutely have to abide by... Furthermore, whatever I say here, won't you forget once you return? Even if I do elaborate, it won't be of any use."

"Now that you mention it, that's true..."

Godou replied in a soft voice. Her words did, after all, remain in this realm of unconsciousness.

Perhaps the sixth sense and instincts of the Campiones that Godou had, were the information that she had relayed from this realm.

"Be careful. That person, is really vulgar, an enemy of women, unfit for the title of 'hero'! If you end up having to fight him again, you definitely cannot lose! You must give him a thorough thrashing!"

As I thought, this wasn't a warning.

This was more like when the sports-minded seniors were emphasizing 'you must definitely win' to their juniors when playing against a rival school, for example. That kind of message was conveyed. Having that kind of feeling, Godou sighed deeply, as he returned to the real world.

The awakened Godou raised his upper body.

He was on a bed. Though the room was small, it was kept very clean. Is it a guest room? As there weren't many daily necessities that could be seen, it felt like this room was rarely used.

Beside the bed, there was a familiar girl. Though, it was not the pretty girl who had reddish golden hair.

She was just as beautiful, though, the fairy-like, silver haired knight.

"Wh-What time is it now?"

"R-Right now, it is almost noon."

"Then, where are we?"

"This is the house of Diana Milito. My companion who stays in Naples. In order to take care of you, I borrowed her guest room."

Liliana Kranjcar answered the questions that Godou had asked the moment he awoke. It must have been about one o'clock, past midnight when he was defeated by Perseus. Has he slept for half a day?

Strange... Godou tilted his head.

Verethragna's seventh form, the [Ram]. This power allowed him to avoid dea- no, resurrect him from death. However, because it was not activated automatically, it would be meaningless if he was killed instantly.

And, he would be in a sleeping state for a certain period of time, until he was fully recovered.

However, the time that he slept this time was the longest by far, it seemed as though he had the memory of entering the dream world, could it be because of that? Even so, it seems that he had gotten used to death...

To him, who had naturally accepted the cycle of death and resurrection, he felt somewhat sad for himself.

"—Kusanagi Godou!"

His name was suddenly shouted.

Turning around, he could see big drops of tears in Liliana's eyes , and she had a complicated expression on her face.

"I-Is your body still hurt? Last night, after being struck down by Perseus, even your breathing had stopped, I don't even know when you had started getting better..."

"Ah, sorry about that. Because of various reasons, I managed to survive..."

I see. From the angle of someone who did not know the reason behind it, it would have seemed like a miracle.

As he was reflecting on this, Godou gave a simple explanation of his resurrection. He wasn't sure if she had heard the details of his unreliable power, but Liliana's tears had begun to fall.

...She's crying? This stout-hearted girl? With such an unexpected development, Godou shrunk back in fear.

"I-If you can resurrect yourself, then please tell us first before you go and die... Do you have any idea how worried I was!"

"S-Sorry. There just wasn't any time for me to explain."

Godou could only lower his head in the face of the crying and angry Liliana. He had lost. He honestly did not think she would start crying.

"Knowing how to manage your time is also part of the abilities of a King! B-but, I'm really relieved. That you have safely returned. .. I'm truly sorry. It is because of my failure that things had turned out like that!"

Liliana who had ceased to be angry was crying and apologizing.

His opinion of her changed yet again, because she looked like a doll, he did not think that she was someone who revealed her emotions. In reality, she was really an emotional girl.

She had been seriously anxious and angry, and her emotions were clearly displayed on her face.

"Well, since I managed to survive, isn't it a happy ending? ... Because, you didn't really fail or anything. It was because I am too weak that I lost to Perseus."

Hearing Godou say that, Liliana immediately raised her face, which was wet with tears.

"N-No, that's not it. Your defeat was my failure... If at that time, I had k-kissed you, the ending would have turned out differently, wouldn't it."

Godou felt his face turn red at her reply, and changed the topic in a panicky voice.

"That's not true! That's definitely not the reason I lost! More importantly, what happened after that!? What about Perseus and Athena!?"

"Ah, yes. The problem has not been solved, and danger is still close by."

Liliana then told him what had happened.

Hearing that it was only a temporary truce between the two gods, Godou's heart became heavy, and thought of another troublesome problem.

"Ah, that's right, Erica and the others still don't know that I'm here in Naples... Have you contacted them yet?"

"Um, no... I'm very sorry, but I forgot about that."

"I'm not reprimanding you, you know. I'll go and give them a call, so it's no problem at all."

Although he said that, he was slightly worried.

If Erica and Yuri were to find out about last night, he would no doubt have to face their sarcasm and scolding. If he were to contact them, would he have to hide the truth? Godou scratched his head, considering his options.

"Liliana-sama, all the way since last night, had been at Godou-sama's side looking after him. Really, she has not left the bedside even once, such praiseworthy devotion!"

The person singing praises of her own master was Karen, who had just entered the room.

"K-Karen! It's fine even if you don't say it!"

"Ara Liliana-sama, no need to be shy. A maiden staying at the side of a wounded warrior, it's as though it were a scene from a painting. Going back to the main topic, if you would like to make a call, you can do it right away, but... is that really fine with you, Kusanagi-sama?"

After teasing her master till her face had turned red as an apple, Karen turned to asked Godou.

Not knowing the meaning behind her question, Godou tilted his head to the side.

"May I ask if there's something wrong with that decision?"

"No, while Kusanagi-sama was asleep, we had considered contacting Erica-sama. However, we decided to wait for your decision first, just in case."

The impish maid stated.

"Actually, I'm on good terms with Arianna Hayama Arialdi, so I had heard from her that Kusanagi-sama had come to Italy with

Erica-sama and a Japanese mistress. And another one from Sardinia—please excuse me, the one you are intimate with privately—Lucretia Zola. Together, Kusanagi-sama had went to Sardinia to enjoy a long vacation."

Who, just who was the man being described as a sexual maniac?

At least, it definitely wasn't Kusanagi Godou, hence, when Liliana began to stutter, 'W-What a depraved lifestyle...' and could not stop shaking, he wished she would stop, seriously.

"You had disappeared from your place of residence, leaving behind your lovers to run away with a beautiful young girl on a journey. I had such a big shock when I found out, could they be eloping? Had it been a dispute between lovers—problems between man and woman? In conclusion, I deduced that it might be better not to inform your lovers."

"There are many problems with your train of thought, and furthermore, she's a god!"

"K-Kusanagi Godou... It's fine if you don't mind the perception of others, you already are a famous advocate of lechery. It's well within reason to have one or two h-harems under your management... Yes, you will then bathe in a bath filled with champagne, and indulge in debauchery together with your lovers, no doubt about it! And then one day, you will gather every beautiful woman in the world, creating the biggest harem history has ever recorded! —Ku, what depravity!"

"Liliana-sama, that is only natural for a King. Well, men are such creatures, after all."

"Oi, oi! Don't be spouting such nonsense with a straight face!"

Ultimately, Godou had to spend ten minutes to resolve this.

Scolding the Liliana who had blurted out some ridiculous fantasies of hers, and then intimidating Karen who was adding oil to fire, things finally quietened down.

"... And that's how it is, I do not have any lovers, there's nothing between me and Erica, we're just friends, Mariya—the Japanese girl—is also the same, and lastly, about Lucretia Zola, she's an elder, the same age as my grandmother!"

"Can normal friends kiss each other so passionately? If that's the case, then wouldn't there be a problem with your morals and sense of virtues?"

"That... that couldn't be helped, we had no choice!"

He had already repeated that excuse many times, to no effect.

Karen had an impish smile that did not quite reach her eyes, disregarding his words. On the other hand, Liliana appeared to have sunk into deep thought, but fortunately she did not pursue the matter, though she seemed to be acting a little weird.

Godou then borrowed the phone, and dialed Erica's number.

The call did not connect, and he repeated the procedure for Lucretia and Anna's numbers, which did not work either. Yuri's phone was the same as Godou's, they could not be used in Italy, hence he did not dial her number.

In the end... even after many tries, he could not reach any of his companions on the island of Sardinia.

Part 3

"Then, you were not able to get in contact with any of your companions? How very strange—!"

This day, at the old bookstore which had hung up the 'Closed for business today' sign, the house of the witch, Diana Milito.

The exact location was Diana's kitchen.

Despite the late timing for lunch, the table was piled with food. They sat in a circle around the dining table discussing, including the master and servant pair Liliana and Karen, and Kusanagi Godou.

"That's right. I would like to try contacting the headquarters of Erica and the others, and ask if they have any news of them, would you mind giving me their contact information?"

"If that's what you need, then you should leave it to us, there's no need to worry."

Kusanagi Godou was talking to Diana.

Meanwhile, Liliana had been constantly stabbing the seafood salad with her fork, wearing a dark expression. Things that have been giving her a headache have been piling up as high as a mountain, hence it was natural that she did not want to join in the conversation.

On an unrelated note, while preparing lunch, Diana had said, for example, 'Sir Salvatore is famous for having no interest in women, while Kusanagi-sama is still young and lecherous, right? .. .Whether he has any interest in women that are older than him, I'm a little worried!' while being fidgety and seemingly bothered.

"Well then, Kusanagi Godou—the incident this time round, I leave it in your hands, will there be a problem with that?"

In any case, he needed to say something constructive.

When Liliana reaffirmed it with him, the youngest Campione, naturally, nodded his head.

"Since no-one knows where that bastard Doni has gone, and the only one left is me, I have to do something about it. Maybe this is some kind of fate."

Compared to all the other [Kings] who had various personality faults, he was the more understanding kind.

He was also chivalrous and dedicated, if it were not for his immoral love affairs, he would definitely be a great, upstanding man of influence, Liliana could not help but think this way.

Erica—that vixen—what did she think of his womanizing ways ?

Turning a blind eye. Crying oneself to sleep.[17] No, those definitely don't seem like her—Or maybe, is she actively cooperating and assisting him? That is a very high possibility!

Creating an environment of depravity for the [King], causing him to be overly indulgent, and then controlling him for herself!

No, wait... Indeed, she is horrible enough to be called a demon, but going to those lengths is simply too vicious. Being a dignified knight, one should have the pride not to do that.

"By the way, do you have any news of Doni?"

"Y-Yes, about that... On that subject, this morning, Sir Andrea—Sir Salvatore's butler that is—there was a phone call from him. Didn't you pick up that call, Diana?"

Being suddenly asked out of the blue, Liliana replied, flustered.

Not good. I should keep those excessive thoughts out of my head, when having these serious talks.

"He called to confirm our current situation. Not even he had an idea of the current whereabouts of Sir Salvatore... Furthermore, I had just attempted to give him a call earlier, but I could not get through no matter how many times I tried."

"The same situation as those in Sardinia..."

Hearing Diana's report, Kusanagi Godou made a difficult expression.

Though the situation did not seem optimistic, but he did not show any traces of worry in his expression. It might be that those unreachable people were very capable, especially Salvatore Doni. It was hard to imagine him being in any sort of danger, Liliana could agree with that point of view.

"May I raise a suggestion?"

Karen, who had been listening, piped out.

Having finished serving the food, she was sitting and eating together with them.

"There are too many things which we do not have a clear understanding of at the moment, and the current pressing matters have not been resolved yet. However—the most important thing right now, I believe, would be what we can do in order for Kusanagi-sama to defeat Perseus."

"That's true—I have to duel that guy... Truthfully speaking, the odds are against me."

Kusanagi Godou murmured.

"If it's a problem with [Instruction], in Naples, there are many who are skilled at it—me, for example—witches who are capable at the use of that, there's no need to worry about this."

"Ah, no. Although there's a problem with that, I'm concerned with something more worrisome!"

Diana said that, with the look of someone who had absolutely no problem with it, and the panicking young [King] avoided the topic.

"That guy, Perseus, has the ability to completely seal my powers , so even if I use the [Sword], it would probably be sealed as well, if I knew how he could pull that off—the secret of how he sealed the authorities of Verethragna—then the ending might have been different."

"...That's how it was, eh."

Diana sank into deep thought.

As a Great Knight and a witch, she felt frustrated and mortified, but Liliana also had no idea what had happened. Of course, Karen was the same, hence they were eagerly awaiting their senior's input.

"Perseus' name also bears the meaning of 'One who came from Persia', in actual fact, his divine attribute has its origins from the Oriental."

"Persia? Then, isn't that the same as Verethragna!?"

Godou stood up in shock.

It seemed as if he were very eager, perhaps the origins of how the undefeated war god's powers had been sealed laid in that direction.

"Hm, how should I put it? The Persia referenced here, it only refers to the 'east.' The Persia of old is also the current Iran, and the god, Perseus' early ancestors were from Iraq, specifically Babylon."

Without a doubt, Perseus was a hero born in Mesopotamia. However, in the battle last night, he had referred to Verethragna as a "distant comrade."

Liliana looked very confused, as she did not know these facts.

"To save his wife Andromeda, he slew the monster Tiamat. Legends say that it is a colossal whale or sea serpent type of sea monster."

Liliana understood the meaning of Diana's words.

In these times, the constellation Cetus referred to the sea monster, Tiamat. The constellation of Perseus, the constellation of Andromeda and the constellation of Cassiopeia, for example, these constellations were known as the constellations that represented autumn.

However, that name had a more important meaning.

"The name of Tiamat also shares the meaning of a goddess of Babylon. A great goddess of the land that gave birth to gods, a ruler of the divine world, a goddess that took the form of a dragon, and also a bringer of floods. The one who had struck her down was Marduk, a god of storms, becoming the King of the gods."

"Are you saying that... When this myth spread to Greece, it became the myth of Perseus?"

Godou felt as if he had stumbled on a piece of the truth.

The story of Marduk slaying Tiamat had been altered with the passing down of the story through the centuries, becoming the myth of Perseus. Because of that, Perseus had been known as 'One who came from Persia'.

Greek mythology had no form of its own, rather, it was a combination of many different myths from many different places.

Many examples could be found that depicted the gods of other cultures as evil gods or monsters within Greek mythology.

Athena and Medusa was a very good example of this, and in this regard, Perseus probably had better luck.

"And that's it, the only mystery remaining is the relationship with the god Verethragna."

Diana seemed somewhat sorry.

Having grasped a little of the situation, Godou looked up at the ceiling, a little troubled.

"If only Mariya were here, she might have been able to give us some clues."

"Though I agree with you on this point, but since we are unable to get in contact with them, we'll have to give up on that. Or are you implying that we are not capable enough to uncover the secret of Perseus? At any rate, let's think of something together, shall we? "

Liliana made a realistic suggestion.

In Europe, people like Mariya Yuri who were gifted with such spiritual vision were scarce. Perhaps he had been asking for too much, and the young Campione nodded his head in agreement.

"I'll try to contact some friends and see if I can find out anything about their whereabouts. In this kind of situation, the best person to consult is Mariya or Lucretia, after all. I'm also a little worried for their safety."

With those words, Godou who had eaten his fill stood up from the dining table.

He strode out of the dining room, leaving behind the witches.

"Well then... it would be better if we had a meeting for our next course of action now, don't you agree?"

After Godou had left, leaving behind the three of them, Karen suggested.

"It is just as Kusanagi Godou had said. Contacting his companions is the best course of action right now. That Japanese miko's spirit vision is not something any one of us here can match, and furthermore, we will need to borrow the wisdom of Lucretia Zola."

Hearing Liliana's reply, Diana nodded her head.

The witch of Sardinia, Lucretia Zola, known as [Scholar of the Gods], had extensive knowledge of the [Heretic Gods], techniques of magical arts and the strength of magical energies. Truly, she was a stellar witch. Even the most powerful witch in Naples, Diana , could not hold a candle to her.

"True. Those who have more years to their age compared to us, it's simply a matter of experience!"

If she was asked how many years exactly is the difference in experience, it would surely become awkward.

Karen, who had considered this point, did not ask.

"In that case, the responsibility of assisting the [King], would have to fall on the lovers of Kusanagi-sama, which would mean that all the credit will be snatched away by Erica-sama... Also, Erica-sama is a Great Knight of [Copper-Black Cross]..."

Liliana had roughly guessed her witch junior from the same organization, her servant's intention and meaning behind those words.

"In the same situation, but seemingly powerless, won't the name of the [Bronze-Black Cross] be shamed?"

"If it's only a little, that's also fine by me..."

Karen's true reason as to why she did not contact Erica, was probably this. Finding opportunities to boost their own side's standing, and also preventing their rivals from advancing.

"However, in the face of the threat of a [Heretic God], this is not the time to be concerned about those trivial things, it is enough that we only have to do our part to the best of our abilities."

Liliana said, resolutely.

"Even if our endeavors fall short and victory is ultimately obtained through the utmost efforts of Erica and the others, isn't that fine as well? No matter who achieves it, if the [Heretic God] is forced back, bringing safety back to Naples would be sufficient... Even if that is not the case, I will do my utmost rendering my assistance to Kusanagi Godou and achieving victory together, is this acceptable?"

"Understood."

Karen respectfully nodded her head, before continuing,

"If it's Liliana-sama, then it would be natural to think along those lines. In that case, then let us inform the headquarters of the [Bronze-Black Cross] to search for Erica-sama and company, whose whereabouts are currently unknown... But, please perform the magic art of [Instruction] on Kusanagi-sama, to create a fait accompli before they arrive, just to be sure."

"Eh?"

"Of course, this is Liliana-sama's duty. Since you want to do your utmost to help, naturally you won't refuse? Seeing as you've already said so yourself."

"Eeeeh!?"

Oh no. They've turned my words against me! Liliana realized that she had been set up.

"No, listen here, didn't he say it before? That the secret of Perseus has not been cracked yet!"

"If it's about the secret, we'll be able to find the answer if everyone brainstorms together. But if we do not decide on a course of action, we will not be able to proceed smoothly."

"I-It's fine even if it's not me, didn't you say that you would be fine with it, Diana?"

"Th-That's true—It's embarrassing, but if it's for the sake of fighting a god..."

Diana answered, her cheeks flushing red. *Yep, she may be a little older, but she is still pretty cute. Kusanagi Godou, being the lecher he is, should be fine with her.*

"Well, although we have that last resort available, but—"

In response to Liliana's suggestion, Karen replied, smiling.

A smile like an evil black cat, giving off an ill omen.

"What I would like to say is, that this incident is, surely, fate."

"F-Fate?"

"That is correct. Between Kusanagi-sama and Liliana-sama, there is a bond of destiny. I mean, it is not normal, that the situation has become so serious to the extent that Liliana-sama has no other choice but to kiss a man, this is definitely the work of fate, connecting two persons together, guiding the both of you."

"H-How can I believe such an overbearing reason?!"

"Then, Liliana-sama, earlier on, why were you sneaking glances at Kusanagi-sama with such a fervent look in your eyes? Also, the both of you had spent the whole of last night together. Are you starting to feel that you have no other choice but to get closer to that King? Fufu, it's futile to feign innocence. Because, I have already seen through everything."

When Karen pointed that out, Liliana gulped.

Come to think of it, since that meal, she might have been feeling that way.

Nothatsnotit[18], it's not fate not anything like that. Just—yes—it was just that when she looked at the face of her [King], her heart would beat furiously in her chest uncontrollably!

"To make it clear, Liliana-sama has fallen in love. Yes, the throbbing in your chest is the feeling of the fact that you can't help noticing him as a man. That, for sure, is love!"

"L-Love!?"

Liliana was stunned. That was ridiculous. She did not want to believe it, but what if it were true?

"Ara, is that so? I suppose we've no other choice, the job of kissing Kusanagi-sama, we'll leave it to Lily in that case!"

"D-Diana, you too!?"

"Furthermore, this fated love will bring along with it luxury and privilege. In order for Liliana-sama to succeed in becoming Kusanagi-sama's lover, the Great Knight of the [Bronze-Black Cross] has to stay by the [King]'s side and wait upon him."

"L-Lover...? Karen, what are you saying!?"

"Ah, I see. Fufu, that Karen, thinking of such vicious thoughts, just like always!"

In contrast with the distressed Liliana, Diana seemed oddly happy. To the two who were older, Karen smoothly explained her plan.

"From the results of my analysis of Kusanagi-sama since yesterday night, he is not as accustomed to handling women as the rumors say. At this point in time, his lovers and personal aides are easily able to exert their influence over him. Of these, there are two of them at the moment. If one were to enter the field and chase them away, one would need to have power of equal strength!"

"Ch-Chase away!?"

"Yes. Fortunately for us, Liliana-sama is a Great Knight and also a witch of the [Bronze-Black Cross], and the next-in-line to be the head of the Kranjcar family. Whether it is magical or political power, you would definitely do him proud."

Currently, the organization with the greatest connections and influence over Kusanagi Godou was the [Copper-Black Cross].

Although the organization has not yet fully submitted themselves to him, they had monopolized his influence. As a result , the other mages were unable to get close to him. The situation was both insalubrious and unfair.

To put an end to that collusive relationship, necessary measures must be taken, and after hearing all that, even Liliana had nothing more to say.

She, as Kusanagi Godou's lover. Was such a future possible?

Unintentionally, Liliana fell into deep thought. For some reason, her mind had begun to fill with random stories and scenarios.

—A young girl, unused to the ways of love.

—Before her, a mysterious, unruly and charming boy had appeared. Around the boy and girl was the coiling scent of danger. Through a meeting of coincidence, they had both realized the other's existence.

—I, with such a half-baked person, I can't possibly like or feel anything else towards him.

—Though she had said that, the girl was still entranced by the boy. And the boy, towards the girl who would not be honest with herself, grew an interest, and before he knew it, he had engraved her presence in his memories, locked in his mind and heart for eternity.

Liliana who had been fantasizing the above quickly shook her head. What on earth was I thinking!?

"Karen, don't say such nonsense to anyone else. I, I'll be taking a short rest!"

The sound of someone standing up from a chair was heard, and Liliana walked out of the kitchen.

And after that, the oldest witch and the maid might have continued whispering things like, '...There's hope yet!', or, '...Yes, that's right, just a little push more, for the sake of shortening the distance between those two, we have to use this trick like this...'.

Part 4

Godou had managed to get in touch with Genaro Gantz through the phone he borrowed.

Neither he nor the others from the [Copper-Black Cross] had the faintest inkling of where Erica might be, which meant that they could not contact them either. Really, what is going on?

Could it be that a [Heretic God] had descended upon Sardinia, causing something strange to happen?

"That is a possibility, seeing as that demoness wouldn't disappear for no good reason... Leave the matters on that side for us to investigate, and the incident in Naples, we'll leave to you."

"I got it, then I'm counting on you."

After designating their tasks, they said their farewells and hung up the call.

After hurriedly finishing the call, Godou returned to the closed old bookstore.

This was logical, but he was surrounded by western books. Because of that, the atmosphere here was the same as his house in Japan. Even if the country was different, the smell of the air inside the bookstore was the same.

It was past seven in the evening.

Even so, it was still very bright, usual for a summer day in Europe. If this were Japan, it would already have been dark.

In the interior of the shop, dyed orange by the sun setting in the west, Godou had borrowed a phone, and then contacted all of his Italian acquaintances. Finishing all that, Godou looked out the window.

The outside gave off a feel of an industrial area, due to the rubbish that were littered all over the place.

In the grocery store on the opposite side of the street, there was a frighteningly fat woman in a sleeveless, midriff-baring top and hot pants running the shop. It was a scene that fully displayed the cultural gap between Italy and Japan.

If only he had the time and mood, he would have very much liked to go for a jog.

He gave up on that thought quickly, and went to look for the witches... on the way, he found a notebook with a black leather cover.

Whose belonging is that? Without thinking, Godou picked it up, and opened it.

[Stop, let go of me! I, I really hate you!]

[Fuu. Then, why did you come here? I know the reason. You are —]

[Ah, no—ngh!?]

[I won't let go of you. Be my woman.]

Is this a shoujo novel? No, a harlequin romance?

This was a romance novel depicting the love of two, but written by hand. The protagonist had, as though no one else was around, aggressively made advances on the heroine, kissing her against her will, and things like that.

"I have lost—I'd never have thought that such a thing could be written..."

Godou deeply regretted looking at the contents.

He felt somewhat guilty about sneaking a look. To whom does this belong to? The person who seemed like she would write this way, was it Diana?

Just as he thought of sneakily returning it at a later time and as he closed the notebook.

He felt a chilling sensation on his back, chilling, and sharp. This feeling, should be a blade.

"Do not move. Just like this, let's go outside... Do not make a sound, and act more natural. Understood?"

A soft warning—No, a threat.

Who is that? It couldn't be the showy, grandiose Perseus. Then, was this perhaps an assassin from some secret organization? While worrying over this, Godou followed the instructions, and left the store.

Together with the person holding the blade to his back, they walked along the street that was bathed in the sunlight of the setting sun.

Godou resisted the temptation to look back. If he were to do so, he would definitely get stabbed, it was too risky.

...Before long, they turned into a dirty, dark alleyway.

"It's fine now. Slowly, turn around."

Doing as told, Godou had a shock when he turned around.

An unexpected face.

"What!? Liliana-san, why did you do that!? Could it be that you have been after my life all this time...?"

"Y-You found out about my secret! After I kill you, I'll die too!"

"...Eh?"

Holding a shortsword and with a brooding expression, the words of Liliana Kranjcar had left Godou stunned.

"This notebook, could it possibly be yours!?"

That notebook, whether it was a romance novel, or a collection of poems, he was unsure of.

"Even though I had only just took it out from my bag to write on earlier, I'm not sure when I had lost it... Could it be, that you have searched through my belongings!?"

"I, there's no way I would do that sort of thing! You have to believe me!"

(By the way, this was the work of the scheming Karen, who took it out of her bag, and then before Godou passed through the corridor, purposely left it in his path. The above was the truth behind this incident, but the two of them would never find out about the cause and effect of it.)

"At any rate, since you found out about my secret hobby, I have to silence you!"

"Eh, hold on a second! Killing someone over something of this degree, isn't that too ridiculous!"

"It's not ridiculous at all! I won't allow the number of people who can blackmail me with this to increase any further!"

Speaking of blackmail, Godou immediately thought of someone's face.

That [Diavolo Rosso]—that particular girl and their mutual friend—would in an elegant manner, make request after request, that face.

Although it was an unfounded guess with no evidence behind it, but to think this way was not strange at all.

"Anyway, calm down first. I'm different from Erica, it'll be fine."

"Kuh... To mention that name, as I thought, you must have heard something from that vixen, my secret, for example! Then, after I kill you, I'll make sure I finish that demoness off properly!"

"D-Did I step on a landmine!?"

After spending a few minutes, he had finally managed to convince a distressed Liliana.

Although he had, through much difficulty, conveyed his thoughts and feeling to her, she still seemed to be in a great panic.

"In, in this time of crisis, I was, unintentionally overcome by a surge of idle thoughts, resulting in me writing those things. Please pretend you never saw it. I'm begging you, please forget it somehow!"

She cried out, teary-eyed.

Though he felt that it was not some kind of secret that could never be divulged, Godou nodded his head.

"Ah... Well, I feel that everyone has their own interests, it's no big deal, really."

Godou irresponsibly threw out those words.

He actually meant that it was not worth worrying over such trivial things.

During the Meiji Era, when a head of the Kusanagi household had passed away, his descendants had discovered a collection of roughly three thousand novels about his private life, and in them were written... that when he was on the receiving end of a scolding , or physical abuse from an excessively young girl[19], he would derive masochistic pleasure during the experience. During the family council, the decision that 'This shall be classified as an erotic novel henceforth' was made, becoming a controversial work. Comparing Liliana's work to that...

No matter what, Godou patted her on the shoulder, as though he were trying to console a child, and thus, Godou and Liliana, her eyes moist with tears, the distance between them had shortened.

For some reason, the beautiful fairy-like girl, with tears in her eyes, seemed so much more fragile than her usual self, yet at the same time, she seemed so alluring.

He could no longer see the girl who was stronger than him, more courageous than him in front of him. Godou's protective instincts were triggered, and he hastily turned away in embarrassment.

Liliana too, seemed a little embarrassed herself, her cheeks a deep shade of red.

The atmosphere becoming more and more awkward by the second, the duo fell into silence. This isn't good, what should I—As he was thinking of what to do, a voice suddenly called out towards them.

"Seems you've recovered from your wounds already, and returned to the same old self, tenacious boy."

Proud, dignified, and child-like, but still possessing a queen's majesty.

Godou and Liliana raised their heads upwards.

—Descending upon the dirty, little alley, was none other than [Heretic God Athena].

Chapter 5 - The Missing Kings

Part 1

Spaccanapoli—In a small alleyway in the old street of Naples...

Kusanagi Godou and Liliana Kranjcar had met with the goddess Athena.

"What's with describing me as 'tenacious', stop that. Because of you, I almost died."

"You too, stop saying those deplorable things. To be injured in a battle, it was due to your own inexperience. Firstly, you should be lamenting over your own weakness."

A calm reply to Godou, and the mood became heavier.

Unreasonably dragging in innocent bystanders who had no intention of fighting, this goddess-sama was the root of it all. Her self-centeredness evidently surpassed even Erica's. What a selfish fellow.

"...Kusanagi Godou."

Liliana who had been standing at the side, said in a very soft voice.

As though she were looking to him as for what to do next, and awaiting his order.

Godou shook his head.

He did not intend on fighting the goddess, only temporarily gauging the situation. Although unsure if she had understood from that, Liliana lightly nodded her head.

Counting on this powerful supporter in his heart, Godou turned towards Athena.

"Hey, tell me one thing. This time round, you were the one who dragged me into the battle, so would you mind explaining something to me?"

"What is it? Speak your mind."

"Why was Perseus able to do it—seal the powers of Verethragna ? He, being a bane of serpents, therefore countering Athena's power, that I can understand, due to the story of Medusa, right? But, Perseus and Verethragna have no direct connection, so isn't it strange?"

"About that—"

Her response to Godou's question was a simple faint smile.

As though she were assessing them, she stared at them intently. Her eyes were like that of a predator eyeing its prey.

She was a predator, after all. The aspect of a goddess of battle and hunting.

"No matter how I answer it, there will be things that you cannot comprehend. Indeed, I was the one who dragged you into this, but if I reveal the answer here, this game would not be able to amuse me as much."

"Isn't that fine? I got involved only because of your willful personality."

Godou snapped back in retort.

"Yesterday... you said that you had wanted to train me. The truth probably isn't that you had wanted to avoid conflict with that serpent-slayer, thus dragging me in, correct?"

"Do not sully the name of a goddess of war, Kusanagi Godou."

Athena glared at him, her eyes heavy with threat. "It's true, that I am not in a hurry to battle with that person. The serpent-slaying words of power are an extremely troublesome existence to myself. However, the countermeasures I have against that unfavorable element are far and many, do not treat so lightly the Queen of the land and darkness."

"I'd never would have thought... that you'd have a countermeasure?"

Hiding the joy in his heart, Godou asked.

If it were true, then he might be able to use his trump card against Perseus.

"That's right. If he would use his serpent-slaying words of power, then I would use the scorching flames to melt his steel... Fufu, while you were in a deep sleep, I had already awakened the dormant volcano that lies yonder. If he were to be enveloped by molten lava, even the hero of 《Steel will fall!"

"It's fine even if you don't fell him! I will go and fight him, so you can just sit back and watch!"

This guy wants to blow up the volcano! Godou resisted the urge to exclaim out loud.

Athena was referring to Mount Vesuvius, east of Naples.

During the time of the Roman Empire, Pompeii had been partially destroyed, and buried under ash and pumice from the eruption of Mount Vesuvius. The last time that this volcano had been active was back in 1949, and its distance from Naples was nine kilometers.

Godou finally understood.

Why Athena had accepted the truce after her attack on Perseus.

He was not sure how she had done it, but in order to triumph over Perseus, she had prepared to make use of the volcano, to overcome the unfavorable condition of fighting against a serpent-slayer.

"But, about using the volcano, are you implying that Perseus is weak against heat?"

"It must be an exceedingly intense heat, to the extent that even a dragon would be incinerated. This isn't the only weakness of that guy, either. 《Steel, after all, is that kind of thing, isn't it?"

Steel.

Hearing that word, his emotions were unable to stabilize, and Godou returned to that topic.

"Then let me ask again, why was Verethragna's power sealed?"

"I don't mind telling you, but will you pay the price, Kusanagi Godou?"

...How unreasonable.

"Since you do not want me to personally step in, then wouldn't this request be natural? Though I have dragged you into this, is it not evened out when I listened to your request to back out of the battlefield? Now, if you would like for me to grant you the key to victory, then you will be indebted to me."

In other words, Godou just had to promise her something. Athena smiled wryly.

Godou knew for sure that this goddess would think of something strange and illogical, poking fun at him, for all he knew she might have been overjoyed inside watching his troubled expression.

"You're really an absurd goddess-sama, you know. Fine, what's the price?"

"Hm. I haven't thought that far yet."

Godou had asked, testing the waters, but this was the answer. *Please stop tormenting me already.*

"Fufu, I haven't given it much thought yet—then, in return for my telling of that secret, you would have to grant a request, a desire of mine some day in the future. Do you accept?"

Athena asked, her attitude bold and haughty.

That gaze and that way of speaking, certainly was that of a powerful Queen. As if she were challenging him, testing his courage—

"So, what will you do? You might be gambling away your own life, or even perhaps the life of the person most important to you. Will you accept?"

Godou pondered his options.

The gods were not vicious or evil by nature, but sometimes, they could be a little cruel.

Beings of such power and might, they did not care for the humble humans. In that case, about Athena's request, what would be the correct option?

He thought about it for tens of seconds, and finally made up his mind.

In this situation, it would be a transaction of both high risks and returns, even if things turned out to be the worst case, he could always shamelessly back out of his agreement.

The most important reason actually was—He did not want to give a vague answer. What comes afterwards would be not to get blindly led around by the other party, and maintaining his own pace, but...

"I understand, then..."

"Allow me to answer in the place of the King. Of course, we refuse!"

Just as Godou had wanted to give his answer, he was interrupted.

The one who had been standing by his side and silently watching the entire time, Liliana, had spoken out suddenly.

"I apologize for my rudeness, Athena. The warrior that protects us humans, the King, how could he possibly make such a commitment? Please forget that we had ever said anything!"

"...That answer, is no fun at all. Boring."

The total opposite of the Liliana whose head was bowed respectfully, Athena looked around in disinterest.

"Forget it, if that's the case, then I will be staying at the sea over yonder. Should you have a change of mind, go to the harbor where we were last night, and call my name. No matter the time, I will give you the answer that you seek... Before that troublemaker returns, any time is fine."

The goddess of the land and darkness, with those words, departed from the alley.

Part 2

"Are we supposed to reject those kinds of offer, in this situation ? We could have gotten some information out of Athena, too."

On the way back to Diana's abode, Godou complained.

As he understood the reason why Liliana had done that, he wasn't particularly reprimanding her. He could have snuck out later to meet Athena, after all.

"When you put it that way, are you perhaps thinking of accepting her offer after all?"

"Basically, yes, as long as I state some conditions and try to reach a compromise, it shouldn't be that bad a trade... But, you knew I was going to accept her offer?"

Godou was slightly impressed.

As he thought, Liliana had guessed his intentions.

"Of course I knew. Although the time we have spent together has been short, I can understand the feeling that people get before you do something utterly outrageous!"

"D-Do I seem that weird a person to you?"

"Without a doubt. For example, yesterday, when you had summoned the [Boar] out in the middle of the street."

Hearing her say that, Godou felt somewhat guilty.

Due to his revival from death, he had slept for half a day, and had forgotten all about it.

"Kusanagi Godou—although your daily actions are normal, but during times of crisis, you tend to become reckless, and make impulsive and rash decisions."

As they walked along the road of the old street, Liliana chided him.

Though the attitude and speech were wholly different, in some ways she was as troublesome as Erica and the others. Indignant, Godou retorted.

"I'm not as reckless as you say I am! In that earlier exchange with Athena, it was already going according to my plan!"

"Negotiations with high-ranking mages or [Heretic Gods], you cannot make that sort of commitment or promise, for fear of being controlled! Even if you have the intent to rebel against it, if you had said something like, 'I'll do as you say', they will have absolute power over your will!"

This was a surprising piece of information.

Liliana was truly angry, glaring at the shocked Godou.

"Because you are a Campione, hence even if it were a mage of the highest-tier, his magic would have no hold over you, but she is a goddess! If you make a pact with Athena, a goddess of that level, you won't be able to resist whatever she asks of you!"

"...I see. Then I must thank you for having saved me."

Seems a crisis had been averted earlier.

The self-reflecting Godou honestly expressed his gratitude and apology, and Liliana immediately turned her head away.

"I-It's nothing. As a knight, lending my assistance to the [King] is only natural, I've done nothing to deserve your gratitude, don't worry about it."

She seemed embarrassed.

Her cheeks red, Liliana smiled faintly.

"You shouldn't have fallen for those words in the first place. I had noticed it since last night, but you are too careless at times, please be careful of what your powers might do to the environment in the future!"

"I did try to minimize the collateral damage..."

"That's not what I was trying to say. I wanted to let you know that, to the surrounding people or an organization, a Campione is a being capable of the greatest destruction, and hence, please be more careful next time."

After she said that, Liliana turned her head back.

She looked straight at Godou.

"Although I would like you to be more mindful of the surroundings, but truthfully, it is unnecessary. No matter how much destruction a Campione causes, only a being of equal standing, another Campione, has the right to criticize. It's because of the authority that you possess, that you have gained the title of [King]."

Come to think of it, he had been told something like that by some mage before.

—What you have attained is power on par with the gods and devil kings, a human yet to be above humans, an absolute privilege... for example.

Remembering those ridiculous words, Godou shook his head. *Truly, it was a cruel joke.*

"You should know this too, but both Sir Salvatore and Marquis Voban, neither of their personalities have any praiseworthy aspects. They lack morals that a normal person should have, but as a Campione, a [King], whatever actions they do will be forgiven."

That should not be the case.

Godou shook his head again, *that shouldn't be the case at all.*

"The only duty a Campione has to bear, when a [Heretical God] manifests, is to defend the powerless humans and engage it in battle. This is the one thing that you have to abide by, the one thing that humankind asks of you. Anything else is unnecessary, be it a noble obligation, or a ridiculous request. The only thing you have to do is to follow your base instincts, and do battle with the gods, as a protector of the land."

"What kind of reasoning is that?!"

Godou asserted his stand.

Facing Liliana who was going full steam about the ways of the world.

"Those guys being useless members of society, it was because of the fact that they were originally beyond saving to begin with. Because of that kind of reason, forgiving a Campione no matter what they do, what kind of reasoning is that? Let me ask you, do you really agree with that? I don't think that you really do, but at any rate, please don't, Liliana-san!"

Being on the receiving ends of his questions, Liliana lowered her head, troubled.

This way of thinking had already been ingrained and instilled into her serious, stubborn, yet gentle self, which is why she could tolerate whatever ridiculous shenanigans the other Campiones had done.

"Whatever those guys have done has nothing to do with me. I'll do things my own way. It was only because of a stroke of luck that I have obtained this unimaginable power. While trying not to cause too much trouble to the world, I will find the right way to use this power."

Godou declared loudly.

However, thinking of the constant mistakes that he had made, he decided to add one more thing, just in case.

"But... sometimes I might be a little too careless, and make some mistakes, but I have Erica and Mariya, and also you. Because of everyone that is lending me their hand, I'm sure that things will work out. I'm counting on you, once again."

"M-Me too?"

"Didn't you just help me out big time earlier? If you find it to be too harsh, then just this time would be fine too, you've already done too much for me..."

Thinking carefully and calmly, there probably wasn't anyone who would go this far for someone else.

Neither Erica nor him, would stick their nose that far in someone else's business.

Godou was misunderstanding this, and Liliana shook her head, stopping and heaving a sigh. And, in a knightly manner, she replied,

"If you—if the [King]—desires so, then I am prepared to offer my very being to you, and to do my very best for you... However, shall we rest for today? It's getting rather late."

The serious conversation was abruptly ended.

It was the first time he had seen such a heart-warming smile on Liliana's face, while speaking with such gentleness.

Seeing that expression, he felt that she was no different from a normal girl. Discovering this side to Liliana, he felt a little shy, and nodded.

Before they had realized it, they were in front of Diana's bookstore.

When they were returning, the sun had started to set, and darkness began to cover the sky.

"Ah, that's right, about Perseus' secret, we probably have to figure something out ourselves..."

The two of them walked into the building, and headed straight for the kitchen. Neither Karen nor Diana were around, they were alone together.

"I'll go prepare some tea, please take a short rest in the meantime."

Liliana said, while taking out the necessary equipment from the kitchen shelves.

All Godou had been drinking so far in Italy was only coffee. It was either espresso, cappuccino or latte, usually.

Thinking that it wouldn't be so bad to have a change of pace, Godou took a seat on the chair, and obediently awaited the tea. The unique fragrance of the herbs began to diffuse throughout the house.

"—Please enjoy your tea."

A few minutes had passed.

From Liliana's hands, Godou received a cup of hot amber liquid .

The fragrant smell of mint wafted across his nostrils.

It was a refreshing aroma, but it felt somewhat queer. He took a small sip, and felt the taste spread through his taste buds, but it was accompanied by a bizarre feeling of unease.

"The taste isn't so great, it feels a little odd."

"That is because of the herbs that were used to brew the tea. It is a drink that focuses on nutritional value rather than taste."

Godou had commented without thinking, and Liliana had replied with a shrug.

So it's that kind of drink, and Godou who had understood that point, gulped the entire drink down in one breath.

It was after ten minutes of chatting with Liliana before he noticed the change within his body.

"What... what is this?"

His body had gradually started to feel numb. It had started with his fingers, but only a few moments had passed before his limbs had ceased to function.

Before long, he had lost all motor functions throughout his body .

"As I thought, if it's an internal cause, even if you are a Campione, magic would still have an effect."

Liliana said, to the Godou who was unable to move.

Was she forcing him to rest!? Godou was shocked. Why had she done that!?

"I had mixed a drug that numbs magical energy into the tea... Even though it had the taste and aroma of herbs, you still managed to sense it. I did not expect that—"

So that was what it was, the sensation of drinking a drug?

The enhanced senses of a Campione, detecting the drug being ingested, had sent warning signals to the body, and Godou swore to himself that he would not fall for this again.

"It's as you've said, we can obtain the needed information if we negotiate with Athena. There was nothing wrong with it, just that the one to negotiate with her shouldn't have been you. If our trump card against the gods were to be sacrificed, it would be putting the cart before the horse."

Unsure whether it were a problem with the five senses or his brain, his body simply would not obey.

Liliana gently held Godou, and placed him against the wall, in a leaning position.

"About my going to negotiate with Athena about what was mentioned earlier, of course, I'll have to make her promise not to harm you in any way... Because I'm a witch, I should be able to get along with a great goddess of the land like Athena just fine. Please leave it to me, I should be able to obtain at least a little bit of information."

It had only been because he was a Campione that Athena had offered the secret, and a [Heretic God] most likely would not make a deal with a mere human. This was too risky.

Godou would very much liked to have told her that, but he could not even utter a single word.

"If you came along, the negotiation might very well go wrong, in some way I wouldn't expect. Hence, it would best if I went alone. The drug was a last resort, please forgive me."

With those words, Liliana left the kitchen.

Only Godou remained in the room. Mustering all of his will and strength, he attempted to force his body to move, but it did not work.

—I am strongest amongst the strong. Truly, I am one that holds each and every victory.

—I care not whom challenges me, whether man or devil; I may face all my foes and all my enemies. Regardless, I shall crush all those who wouldst stand in my way.

Godou chanted the scripture of Verethragna in his heart, and his body began to fill with the power of the Persian war god. The numbness had begun to fade little by little.

The effect will wear off if I keep going at this.

Not relying on his physical body, but instead making use of the magical power, Godou had managed to purge a little of the drug.

Directly channeling the magic into his body, without a doubt, was the most effective method to use on a Campione's body, but it was a desperate measure due to his powerlessness at the moment.

Leaving aside the gods, to lose like this to a normal magic user —

While telling himself that, Godou continued the fight against the numbness in his body.

Part 3

This was the harbor of Santa Lucia district.

It was the location of the confrontation with Perseus the previous day, and also where Godou and Athena had showed up. Liliana had spent about twenty minutes to return here, and called out towards the sea,

"O' great goddess Athena, the humble knight Liliana Kranjcar hereby requests an audience with you! Please allow me this honor of being in your presence!"

Liliana's voice resounded across the sea, which was dyed red by the sunset.

It was only a brief while before a patch of darkness with an outline of silver began to form at another end of the harbor. The darkness rapidly took the shape of Heretic Athena, who slowly walked towards Liliana.

"Why did Kusanagi Godou not come? Little girl, my business is not with you."

The goddess said with an air of arrogance, but she had expected that.

No matter what happens later, she had to obtain some information on Perseus.

Liliana was nervous and tense.

To negotiate not with a blade but with words, it was not her specialty. Rather, Erica was better at the arts of persuasion, but in this situation she could only grit her teeth and do it...

"On behalf of the King I have come to make a request, an enquiry on the principles of Perseus' power which allowed him to seal the authorities of Kusanagi Godou. Because of our shortcomings, we were not able to understand the mystery behind it, and thus, I beseech you to grant us your wisdom—"

"I've said it before, there is a price to be paid."

Athena coldly stated, and Liliana hesitated.

She had not been expecting Athena to give an answer easily.

Her aim was to obtain a few tidbits of information from the goddess. If they had gone with this strategy earlier in the negotiation by Kusanagi Godou, they might have been able to get a few clues by now. But from the cold expression of the other party , the chances of being lied to were rather high, and thus she said...

"Please, to Kusanagi Godou who is fighting on your behalf, do you not have any parting gifts?"

"Didn't I say this before too? He could have chosen not to fight, and to let me fling that troublemaking hero right into the depths of that volcano. If he had done that, then wouldn't it have been much less troublesome for him?"

Athena's tone had not a single bit of interest in it.

If this willful girl were a human, Liliana would have given her quite the scolding. However...

Liliana resisted the urge, and was repeatedly reciting, 'Bear with it, bear with it!' to herself. A normal mage would have given up by then, given such an unreasonable goddess.

She had the disposition of a witch, after all.

The origins of the witches of Europe, were the mikos who had worshipped Athena.

Studying the spiritual senses, listening to the words of the goddess.

The words of power and divinity of the goddess of the land granted power to the witches. The resulting possibility of obtaining the scattered wisdom of the gods and revelations were high—

"Though, when I had initially brought Kusanagi Godou here, I did not expect a god of that nature to manifest. Perhaps this might be destiny. Encountering the leader of the ancient east is indeed harsh, but should he fail to succeed, we can only say that the brat's capabilities were simply not enough..."

Athena laughed happily.

Leader of the ancient east? Come to think of it, what was it she said earlier? A troublemaker. She had called that beautiful hero a troublemaker , or something like that.

Athena had many things to say about Perseus.

All her words continued to spin around in Liliana's head, like a burst of inspiration through a broken barrier. The goddess had, from the start, seen through the hero's origins.

Then, what was that image that she had seen?

A brilliant, golden light. The fragments of the sun that rained down from the sky. Rays of the sun.

The hero who had combined all of these also had the attribute of steel, one of the gods of the sword.

Diana had said that he was 'One who came from Persia'. His name was Perseus. However, that was not enough. The true name of the god, no, the true origin was—

"...Ho. You, are a miko, aren't you?"

Athena who had discovered that fact, stared at her.

Liliana felt a shuddering chill, as though she were a rodent being stared at by a snake, an insect being hunted by an owl. She was in the same situation as those vermin, as helpless as them.

"Speaking of which, Kusanagi Godou has quite the talented miko serving him, back in his homeland. Fufu, a revelation, from only my words? Now then, should I allow you to return with the answer in your head..."

Like a predator playing with its prey.

With that kind of feeling, Athena pondered to herself. The sharp eyes of the goddess of knowledge had seen through the fact that Liliana had discovered something through inspiration—to Liliana, the situation had taken a turn for the worse.

Athena extended her hand to the chin of the taller Liliana, making contact with the tip of her finger.

If the finger were to turn into a weapon at that instant, it would not have been surprising.

Liliana instinctively held her breath, in the face of the death and darkness staring her in the eye. At the very least, she had to find some way to convey what she had discovered to Kusanagi Godou.

"...H-Hold it right there."

Out of the blue, a voice was heard.

To Athena, it was a voice of the youth she had been waiting to hear, but to Liliana, it was the voice of a youth she did not expect to hear here.

"Finally appeared, have you. To have kept me waiting for so long, how rude of you."

"Kusanagi Godou! Why did you come here!?"

The precious miracle drug of paralysis—a cow or horse that drank that amount would have been paralyzed for at least half a day.

But the person, who was swaying and walking with unsteady steps towards them, was surely Kusanagi Godou. It looked like he had not quite recovered fully from the effects of the drug.

Given how unsteady he was, it would not have been shocking if he were to fall over at any time.

Even with his body in this state, he still looked at Athena with a sharp gaze.

"...What are you planning to do with her?"

"I am still thinking of that. This girl with neither manners nor proper upbringing, had obtained a revelation from within my words. Originally, I would simply pass divine punishment over her, however..."

"A revelation?"

"Correct. In order to discern the origins of the one you call Perseus, and furthermore, she almost succeeded in fully understanding his identity... Now then, what should I do with her? "

Athena twirled the finger pressing against Liliana's chin, and slowly brought it downwards.

Gently caressing her neck, as if to warn her that she could break her body any time she wanted.

Continuing downwards, her finger applied a pressure on Liliana's chest, which could definitely not be described as full, as though telling Liliana that it could pierce through if she exerted more force.

Compared to any battle she had ever experienced, the current situation was far more dangerous.

Liliana's life was literally in Athena's hands, and she felt despaired.

"Let go of her, and as the price, I accept your conditions earlier!"

Frightening words escaped the [King]'s lips.

The pleading look in Liliana's eyes, telling him not to do it, had been in vain.

"Kusanagi Godou, isn't it too late to be saying that?"

"It doesn't matter, does it? You're a goddess, at least give me this much. I defeated you last time, too, to the humans, there's this thing called 'preferential treatment for the winner', it wouldn't be too far-fetched to do so."

"... Hm."

"The negotiation will be the same as what we had agreed on last time. You'll tell me Perseus' secret, but if that girl had managed to deduce it from her senses, it might be a little different from our initial agreement, but still, that shouldn't be a problem, should it? Do you find the terms agreeable?"

As Godou finished, Athena casually nodded her head.

Liliana seeing her worst fears become reality, could only cast her gaze downwards.

"Forget it, I'll promise you. Although it didn't go as I'd have liked it to, the both of us stand to gain from this ending. It's fine, isn't it?"

"No, I have one condition."

What is he going to request?

Athena looked over at the boy, raising her brows.

"Although I'll promise you, that one day I'll listen to any one command of yours, but this must never concern the people around me. The only one involved and affected by your command will only be me... Would that be fine?"

"Though you had said that you agreed to the terms, you still demand for another favorable condition for yourself?"

Kusanagi Godou had unabashedly thrown out his condition.

Liliana was astonished to see such a serious and firm expression on his face.

"Try to learn more about human society. Moreover, aren't you the ridiculous and willful one. Against someone as self-centered as you are, using unreasonable methods to deal with them, that is the way of the Kusanagi family... And as you said, the result would be a gain for both of us."

"And if I refuse?"

"Then before that bastard hero comes back, I'll take you on... Even if you defeat me, you still have to face Perseus in single combat, I highly doubt you'll take such huge risks."

Watching the exchange between the goddess and the boy, Liliana finally understood.

Kusanagi Godou was indeed a kind person, but he wasn't naive .

Showing others his sincerity, but at the same time, measuring the pros and cons, picking the best possible choice and telling them that he still has the power and authority. This was a pleasant surprise for Liliana.

"Hm, finally picking up your pace, aren't you?"

Acknowledging his qualification, Athena laughed, and added,

"Very well. In response to my request as a Queen, you have accordingly replied in the style of a King. How fitting of your status as a godslayer, and thus, I hereby agree with the deal... Girl. "

Athena lifted her finger from Liliana's body.

And pushed Liliana lightly with a tap from her finger.

Just like that, she was sent flying, and was caught by the still shaky Godou.

"One last thing, this way you'll be able to completely see through his act—Listen well, Perseus is a serpent-slayer from Babylon, and one of those who allowed that sun god to become a leader of the ancient east, was a person of your pioneer empire."

Person of the pioneer empire. Was she referring to a country that once existed on this soil?

And then, a leader of the ancient east, sun god, that brilliant light that could seal the power of Verethragna, which means that—

Liliana, who was in the embrace of Godou, understood at long last.

The inspiration that she had gotten from Athena and the knowledge she possessed as a mage had merged together, and she finally could understand the true nature of Perseus, and with that, she heaved a sigh of relief.

If that were the case, then having a power that could seal the divine power of Verethragna was nothing unfathomable.

"Have you understood? Then, there's nothing left to do... Kusanagi Godou, the next time we meet will be after your battle has ended. The outcome of that battle, none can predict."

Athena's shape started to distort.

The figure of the young girl began to shrink rapidly, becoming an owl with grey feathers and pitch-black eyes.

The goddess-turned-nocturnal bird flew off towards the horizon, and then...

His body swaying severely, Kusanagi Godou collapsed to the ground along with Liliana whom he had been supporting.

"What's wrong!? Please get a hold of yourself!"

"I-It's nothing. It looks like I haven't fully purged the effects of the drug, and I can't fully use my strength... I'm sorry, I'll have to leave things to you after this..."

"I, I'm very sorry, for the sake of someone like me—!"

Tightly hugging the weakened [King] to her chest, Liliana cried out.

The footsteps of the night drew closer as twilight approached. The appearance of the half-moon that hung high in the sky, seemed to her as if it were laughing at them.

Part 4

"Has this all been your doing!?"

"Fufufu, since you've already made it here, yes, you're correct, I am the mastermind behind this incident! The culprit behind this strange phenomenon!"

It looked as if it were an exchange from a cruel serial killer having the final showdown with a famed detective, as Erica Blandelli faced the immortal devil king.

Behind Erica who had chased him all the way here, was Mariya Yuri.

It was only when she was truly angry that she revealed that chilling cold and strict expression. (She refers to Yuri here)

Yuri's feelings were understandable.

Erica would have very much liked to thoroughly punish the failure of a human in front of her, and then teach him the proper way to live as a normal human being.

At the northern end of the island of Sardinia, the outskirts of Alghero.[20]

They were going to meet up with Kusanagi Godou who was in Naples, and just as they began to move, a strange phenomenon occurred.

Every electronic device had ceased to function.

The electrical appliances in the house could not be turned on, the car would not start, the gas was unusable, even the phone could not be used. Electrical, natural gas, steam, anything that was reliant on being powered by these had been rendered useless.

"Erica-san, this is just like the time when Athena had descended upon Tokyo..."

"I agree. If a [Heretic God] manifests here... just when we were planning to go to Godou's side too, and such a troublesome thing had to happen."

During the afternoon this day, in the rented villa that Godou had once stayed—

The clearly worried Yuri had pointed out a question, and Erica nodded, with a not-so-happy look.

"...For now, I'll just probe around."

Lucretia was currently seated beside the window, looking outside with an annoyed expression.

She was using bread crumbs to attract birds, and then in a low voice, towards the sky, released the magic of [Bewitchment], a spell that turned small animals into familiars.

A magic art that could only be mastered by one possessing the disposition of a witch, one of the arts of [Witchcraft].

Even the publicly acknowledged genius Erica Blandelli could not perform it, hence they patiently waited for the results of Lucretia's work.

The old witch of Sardinia closed her eyes for a moment.

The birds who had become her familiars most likely were sent to scout up to the inside of Alghero, and a highly-skilled witch like Lucretia, would be able to feel everything that her familiars saw and heard.

And, through their eyes as an intermediary, [Spirit Vision] could be employed.

Though it would be nowhere as effective as Yuri's, Lucretia knew quite a few spirit vision techniques.

"The area around us, a strange curse—enveloped in some kind of compelling force, even the whole city too, quite the large area of influence... equipment and devices used for a civilized life are being disabled, perhaps a barrier of [Restriction]?"

Ten minutes had passed before Lucretia slowly opened her eyes and explained in a curt tone.

The impatient Erica immediately tossed out a question.

"What about the harbor? Were the boats moving?"

"I've not looked into the exact details yet, but, even we have been affected to this degree, it would be too unreasonable to assume that the boats would be able to function. Even if we were able to get the boats working, there would most assuredly be other influences that this phenomenon will have, given the possibility of it having a massive range of influence. If it were me, I would not consider boats or planes to be a viable form of transport."

"I don't doubt that. Truly a defeat, if we were to leave Sardinia, those two options simply cannot be discounted."

Erica replied in a low voice to the languidly given report.

She was considering her current options of escaping from the island.

"Erica-san, are you perhaps thinking of... disregarding the phenomenon occurring here, and heading straight for Naples?"

Her beautiful features strained with anxiety, Yuri enquired.

As expected, she's sharp. She had already guessed what Erica was thinking of from her expression.

"That's right. Over there, Godou is battling with the [Heretic God]—and it seems he had lost, but did not die. Right now, he is surely facing a crisis. If I do not help him, who will?"

The strange phenomenon that had occurred was indeed bothering her. *How troublesome.*

However, she knew her priorities, Erica Blandelli, above everything else, was the most worried about Kusanagi Godou—the Campione whom she loved.

Travelling from Sardinia to Naples in about two to three hours was abnormal.

With regards to that, the power of the gods had to have been involved, some way or the other. Although Godou was more strong-willed than his appearance let on, but without sufficient support, he was a [King] that could not display his true strength.

At any rate, she wanted to be at his side as soon as possible, even if it were only an instant earlier.

For the sake of this goal, whatever happened with the phenomenon on Sardinia—She could not be bothered.

"B-But, Erica-sama, this is like that time in Tokyo, the area of influence might very well be immense, right? Although the matter of Godou-san's well-being is worrying, there's also the problem of whether we can leave the island..."

A troubled expression could be seen on Arianna Hayama Arialdi's face.

"Even that Athena could not engulf the entire Tokyo in darkness, and Sardinia is bigger than Tokyo. If we wanted to leave Alghero immediately, it would not be difficult to accomplish."

Erica immediately rejected her personal maid's uneasiness.

Cars and motorcycles being non-functional would only affect normal people. For mages, they could easily employ magics that enhance their mobility to reach the nearest city, or stables to obtain a horse.

"...No. That is simply no good, Erica-san."

The one who had suddenly stated that was Yuri.

"We must first resolve the disaster here, and then set out for Naples. A barrier that can disable the functions of mechanisms, is not a spell that a normal mage is capable of. Without a doubt, this is the work of a [Heretic God], or the magic of a similar existence."

"Of course I know that. But, to me, Godou is more important."

Hearing those words, Erica could not help but frown, and replied.

"Thus, I've decided that I have to leave this place as fast as I can. Yuri, what about you? Aren't you bothered by the fact that Godou is fighting a god on his own?"

"Of course, I am worried! Unbearably so!"

Yuri firmly responded, and her voice was trembling with unease.

From that beautiful face, a resolute determination could be felt. She was not as strong nor as resourceful as Erica, but this girl was, at times, far more courageous and noble than anyone else. This was the case now.

In times like this, one would feel that Mariya Yuri was indeed a Hime-Miko—in other words, a "princess."

She would control her personal feelings, and would care for people who she did not even know, speaking out for them, and understood the importance of taking action.

"Besides Lucretia-san, the strongest person on this island is Erica-san. If you were to leave, how would the situation turn out? This phenomenon would continue, and if the damage radius increases even further, who knows how much havoc that would cause... You understand this, don't you?"

A barrier that disabled the use of electrical devices and machines.

If it were only to happen within the villa, the worst that might happen is to suffer Lucretia's complaints over the lack of air-conditioning, but, should this affect the hospitals—It was anyone's guess what terrible things might come of it.

If some airplane were to accidentally enter this barrier—neither would that turn out well.

Erica took a deep breath.

Her current self was neither calm nor public-spirited, a behavior unbecoming of a knight that protects, but the priorities in her heart did not change.

There was no other choice. In this case, she would have to resolve the problem the fastest she could and then rush towards Naples. To fulfill her responsibilities and aid the people, this was all she could do for now.

And thus, Erica and the others, began to spring into action—

Those were the circumstances in which the girls bore a grim resolution.

Arianna and Lucretia were on standby in the villa.

Erica who had combat capabilities and Yuri who had spirit vision were to scout the area around.

They began by splitting the workload this way, wanting to swiftly find the root of the phenomenon, and destroy it if possible. If not, they were to bring it back for investigation.

—Perhaps they might encounter a [Heretic God], this expedition had quite the risk attached.

Yes, that was what they had intended.

"Somehow, I feel that everyone has become like Lucretia. Self-indulgent."

"To that remark, I'm afraid I cannot comment..."

They decided to head for the nearest street to gather information.

Erica and Yuri who had decided that, moved towards a small street known as Fertilia.

Every single device or gadget of civilization were under [Restriction], which puzzled the residents greatly. For now, there were not any signs of imminent danger...

They sighed over the fact that they could not lead a civilized life , but on the other hand, they continued about their lives in laziness and luxury.

Some were drinking beer and juice.

Some, it might have been due to the unusable machines that they were unable to work, were simply stoning and daydreaming.

Others were outside simply because it was too hot inside, napping beside the road or beneath the eaves.

Erica and Yuri moved to and fro between these people. There were no bars or restaurants as it was a minor street, but there was still a supermarket.

What surprised Erica was that familiar face she saw walking out from the supermarket.

A blond youth, skipping and humming as he left the supermarket, wearing an aloha shirt. Hugged to his chest was a bag from the supermarket, most likely filled with beer and snacks.

He was singing something along the lines of 'My ~ sun ~ 'o ~ sole ~ mio'[21].

"W-Why is that person here... What's going on?"

"Erica-san, an acquaintance of yours?"

"Um, I guess so. If it's just the name, I think Yuri should know it too."

The two of them immediately hid themselves, exchanging whispers.

Erica told Yuri the name, and she responded with an 'Eeh!?' in exclamation.

"I think that this incident—the culprit behind the barrier—is very likely to be him."

"E-Erica-san! It's very impolite to be suspecting people with no proof or evidence. Doesn't he come here occasionally, too!?"

"No, Yuri. If that person is here, then any strange incidents in the area, usually will have something to do with him... I'll follow him. And put an end to this right away!"

From then, it was smooth sailing.

Paying extra careful attention, using magic at times, that youth did not even realize that he was being shadowed.

As he was walking, he saw a bicycle that had been left at the side of road. He simply hopped onto it and rode off, placing the supermarket bag onto the basket at the front of the bicycle, while humming, 'Santa ~ Lu ~ cia', heading northwards.

At once, Erica broke the lock of a nearby bicycle.

With great difficulty, she placed the angry Yuri at the backseat, and went in hot pursuit of the youth who was riding the bicycle on the coastal road.

It was a relaxing trip, a journey accompanied by the sea breeze and sunset, and lasted for about twenty minutes.

—A swimming area of a beach, with a parasol rental service.

Perhaps it was due to the strange phenomenon that the beach was almost deserted. In the sea that was dyed a fiery red from the sunset, there were still quite a few people playing around, it was not completely devoid of activity, at the very least.

The youth walked towards the beach.

He headed towards a parasol that was at the edge of the beach. For some reason, there was a youth that had been tied up with ropes and an icebox.

"That's Sir Andrea! As I thought, he's up to no good! Yuri, follow me!"

"Y-Yes!"

The youth being bound by the ropes was Andrea Rivera, the person they had spoken to this morning.

Erica dashed towards them, yelling.

"Sir Salvatore! Has this all been your doing!?"

"Fufufu, since you've already made it here, yes, you're correct, I am the mastermind behind this incident! The culprit behind this strange phenomenon!"

The blond youth slowly turned his head, replying in a bold manner.

This was of course, the [King of Swords] Salvatore Doni.

"Godou seemed to be of the impression that I didn't have any other tricks besides knowing how to swing a sword, but in actual fact I still had this up my sleeve. Shocking, isn't it?"

"Rather than being shocked, it's more of a sense of defeat, you gigantic moron..."

The tied-up Rivera revealed a disgusted expression.

It's been hard on you, Erica sincerely felt sympathetic towards him.

Even someone at the level of Genaro Gantz or the [Old Dame] of Saint Pintoricchio would not easily escape.

"That reminds me, Sir Andrea, which authority was the cause of this phenomenon?"

"It was meant to be a closely guarded secret, but since this much had already happened, there's no choice—it's all this moron's... ugh, with the authority Sir Salvatore had gained from the god Vulcan, he is able to regress the level of civilization in the area back to the Middle Ages, for about half a day..."

In the middle of calling him a moron, Andrea had suddenly changed the topic.

The Roman fire god, Vulcan.

The god of fire and blacksmithing, and in Greek mythology he was known as Hephaestus—the divine attribute of invention.

Salvatore Doni possessed four authorities, the first was a demonic sword that cut through all, the second, an undying body of steel, and not much was known of the third and fourth authorities.

Likely, they were trump cards to be used as a last resort, hence they were top secret.

"Erica-san, please look at the area under Sir Salvatore's feet."

Hearing Yuri's small voice, Erica did as told, looking at that spot.

Doni smiled gleefully as he stood on a revolving board that was carved with the Latin words [nudus ara] and [sere nudus]. The meaning of those words were [Plow nude] and [Sow nude]. Words of the poet Hesiod.

Was this the source of the phenomenon?

She glanced aside at Yuri, who nodded. *As I thought.*

...Afterwards, this authority came to be known as [Return to Medieval Style].

Ironically, this was an authority obtained from a god of invention, yet its effect was to seal modern inventions. Erica was stunned, but glared at the [King] anyway.

"My lord. I've heard that a [Heretic God] has descended upon Naples, and Kusanagi Godou is in the midst of fighting it, would you happen to know the details of it?"

"Ah—about that, I think it's at a stalemate right now. That's what Andrea told me."

"Miss Erica, that's the same thing as what we spoke about on the phone this morning. The [Heretic God] Perseus has retreated temporarily, and it would not be long before battle broke out once more."

Erica was a little relieved, but this news was too old.

She had to hurry and meet up with Godou and confirm his condition, hence she had to quickly think of a way to deal with this person, returning the surroundings to a normal state.

"Sir Salvatore, to begin with, for what purpose have you come here?"

"Nothing important, really. I was swallowed up by the waves back in Naples and got swept all the way here. Speaking of which, Andrea, for the purpose of checking on Godou's movements, had come to Sardinia yesterday. The moment I was washed up here, I managed to contact him immediately and subsequently met up with him."

After which, Doni had begun coming up with this plan, to prevent Erica and the others from leaving this place.

He had found out about Rivera who had tried to warn them, and disabled him.

When he had thought of restricting the communications and transportation means, he used the authority of Vulcan, and then brought the tied-up Andrea to the beach, and had some vacation time.

What happened afterwards was the current situation... just hearing about this rendered one speechless, it was just absurd.

"Then, since this plan has been exposed, I only have one thing left to do."

Doni suddenly said.

He stood up sluggishly, his arms hanging loosely.

Though he did not hold any swords, but there was no doubt that this was the [King of Swords]' combat stance. Erica swallowed a breath.

"Sir Salvatore, why do you wish to stop us?"

Erica began to utilize her magic while asking.

She opened the palm of her right hand, and summoned her beloved sword Cuore di Leone.

"Because I would like Godou to become even stronger faster... If you're by his side, it would bring a lot of conveniences for him, hence I would like him to fight this difficult battle alone... It is only in a solitary battle that a warrior can grow the fastest, that's how it is."

Doni smiled wryly.

His ever-present carefree attitude, twisted logic, it was this side of him that people could confirm that he was not a normal youth.

"Hm, at any rate, I'll just cause you to be unable to stand up for one, two hours. And as for the lady from Japan there, maybe I'll give her a special service, so she won't have to suffer any pain. Shall I start, or will you?"

It was as though he were asking you how much sugar you would like in your coffee.

Erica heaved a sigh. The [King of Swords] before her eyes was the strongest swordsman in Europe, there was no chance of her winning. Though she had accepted that fact in her heart, she still charged forth fearlessly.

Employing small tricks against him had no meaning, even if he had said that he'll go easy on her, he was still a formidable foe.

In that case, she decided to go all out right away, and she closed in for the attack.

Fast, and nimbly—

Like a flash of lightning, Cuore di Leone was thrust forward, straight towards the body of the [King of Swords].

"You, and also Liliana Kranjcar, aren't quite there yet, huh..."

Simultaneously, as those words were whispered in a quiet voice , Erica suddenly found herself flying through the air.

Her body drew a parabola curve as it flew through the air, finally collapsing in an undignified heap on the sands.

"Ugh...!"

She wasn't sure when she had been thrown, but when she had thought of finding something to break her fall, she had already hit the ground, the impact spreading throughout her body.

Completely unaware of what he had done, it was a godlike technique.

Erica wanted to get up, but she could not find the strength.

It was as he had said, she was unable to move for the time being . She could not detect any broken bones or heavy injuries, seems that even the degree of damage had been perfectly controlled.

Seeing the defeated lioness Erica glaring at him, Doni waved his hands.

"Well, that's about it. Since I've been discovered already, it's about time I return to Naples. I want to watch Godou's fight with the god up close—who is he fighting? Athena?"

"It should still be Perseus, I think Athena is only tagging along."

Rivera replied with a very troubled look on his face.

Nodding, Doni turned his attention to Yuri. He quickly pulled out his remaining length of rope while humming, and walked towards her.

"Eh? S-Sir Salvatore, what are you going to do to me!? If you are a King, then please be—ah, please stop!"

"I said I won't let you get hurt, that's why I gotta do this. Don't worry, ropes are one of my specialties, there won't be any marks."

"K-KYAAAAAAAAAAAA!?"

And thus, Yuri's hands and legs were tied up.

Doni then stomped the revolving board with Latin words written into pieces.

"With that, we'll return to a civilized life once more... And next, I'll simply board a random boat and head for Naples. You guys can take your time to come, there's no need to rush!"

Doni left that last sentence with the knight lying on the ground and the tied-up Hime-Miko.

All of the above, were the exact details of the turmoil that he had caused on the island of Sardinia.

Chapter 6 - Knight's Oath

Part 1

Even after hearing that name, Godou could make neither heads nor tails of it.

".... I totally have no idea, what kind of god that is."

"That is not surprising. This is a name that even the Europeans have forgotten, an ancient name of the god. As a Japanese, it would be shocking if you did."

Liliana explained.

It had been an hour since they separated from Athena, and Godou who had been under the effects of the drug, walking unsteadily, had since been brought back to the guest room in Diana's house, and was lying on the bed.

And then began Liliana's lecture.

"This divinity, in modern times, is lesser known, but with regards to history, it bears quite an important meaning. He is Sol Invictus, known as Heliogabalus, reigning over the Roman Empire ."

"Eh? Not Greece?"

Though he had previously heard that Perseus originated as a hero from the east, why was the Roman Empire suddenly mentioned? Liliana continued explaining to Godou, who was totally confused.

"Isn't Apollo the sun god of Rome? If it's Greece, shouldn't it be Apollo..."

"No, that's not the case. Indeed, Jupiter and Neptune were both ancient Roman gods too, however - there were no records of similar sun gods being conquered in the ancient times. Using modern terms, it would have been known as the start of a new religion."

"You're saying a new religion started in the Roman Empire?"

"That's correct. The religious ideologies of the Romans, to put it nicely, were tolerant, to put it in a not-so-nice manner, would be to say that it was messy. Compared to the indigenous gods of Rome, the new religions that came out of nowhere were more popular with the people... Regardless, their gods were a combination of the original and the Greek."

"In other words, Rome was a country which housed countless gods."

Thinking back, in some countries, Jupiter was replaced by Zeus, and Neptune by Poseidon.

It was not all that different from the religions in Japan that Godou knew of.

"I feel that that way of thinking is not wrong, if we consider the one who has appeared before us, Perseus. The pioneer of Italy, with his origins of his birth in ancient Rome, all these point towards the answer of the mystery - and with that, how is it?"

Liliana asked him again, and Godou looked at his right hand.

The golden [Sword] that rends the gods, he reaffirmed whether he could use that trump card - he could feel nothing.

"Not yet. With what you have already told me, it's still insufficient to use the [Sword]..."

"T, that had been within my expectations. As I thought, with merely the conclusion through such a concise teaching method is impossible, isn't it."

We probably have to use the usual method, don't we?

Godou's thoughts drifted towards that direction, and the silver-haired knight promptly said,

"Understanding a god's nature, is quite similar to studying history, as you are only studying a certain country during a certain time period, which is actually quite meaningless. If you do not study all the history leading up to that point in history, but rather only the specific portions, you will not be able to obtain the deepest understanding."

I see your point. Godou nodded.

She had said it like a history teacher, but it was convincing.

"Which is why I thought that, if you want to understand the origins of the divinity, you have to at least know the basic knowledge.... I'll do a brief summary first, then we'll return back to the main topic."

If it were Erica, she'll probably say something like, 'What a pain, that method. Since there's such a fun method, let's do that instead'.

Godou was slightly touched by Liliana's diligence. *What a brilliantly shining heart.*

"Then, let's begin with the history of the Indo-Europeans? After becoming an ethnicity in a corner of Caucasus, they soon began to move towards the east... to the plains of India and Iran. In the process, the very first myth of the Indo-Europeans was born from within their mouths."

"Hold on a second.... this is your concise summary?"

From the calendar, that was something that had happened around 3000 to 2000 BC....

"After that, what kind of episode[22] are you going to continue with, may I ask?"

"Let me think. After that would be when the Indo-European ethnicity were moving to the east, they separated at India and Iran.

Then, with the Semites, they created the Ugaritic mythology, and also the ancient European civilizations that created gigantic stone structures, the divinities that they - "

"The scope of your lesson is too long! Too long, definitely too long!"

If there were weekly lectures of two hours, it would at least take two years to finish teaching.

Liliana rebutted, looking distressed,

"W, we don't have a choice! You have to first understand that history, and then about the East Asian countries and Greece, followed by the Roman Empire, and finally you would be able to gain a perfect understanding!"

Is that the case? No wonder Erica had said, 'what a pain' all the time.

..... At this rate, he would have to suggest using *that*. Every time his eyes made contact with Liliana's, he considered that possibility.

This can't go on, neither of us can even look at the other's face. Carrying on in this situation is really painful.

Ultimately, the both of them fell into silence. While thinking hard in their minds, they occasionally glanced at each other. Every time their eyes met, they would become unbearably embarrassed.

Nevertheless, it was at this time when the final blow had landed .

"Kusanagi-sama, Liliana-sama - just earlier, we had received a message from Perseus. Please come with me."

The door of the guest room opened, and came the voice of the maid Karen Jankulovski.

A rare serious expression could be seen on that little devil's face.

At the entrance of Diana's house, it seems that a medal that was pierced with an arrow had been left there.

And that medal was now on the kitchen table.

It was made of white stone. On its surface, the shape of a wings spread, flying bird was carved. Seeing that, Liliana tensed up.

"The mark of the one who reigns over the sun in the sky. Without a doubt, this medal is the symbol of Perseus."

"At the same time, it symbolizes the icon of Ahura Mazda, his secret was exactly the same as what Lily had sensed...."

The two witches, Liliana and Diana, were murmuring to themselves.

Then, Karen who had been waiting at the side lowered her head , and made a request to Godou.

"Kusanagi-sama, please go ahead and touch it. Doing that, you will be able to hear the words of Perseus... When I had picked it up earlier, it gave me quite the shock."

"Ah, ok."

Godou reached out his hand, testing it with his touch.

At that moment, the voice of that handsome man could be heard from the white stone medal.

"Seems you've fully recovered, godslayer! I too, have also had a full recovery. Then, it's about time for us to settle our duel. I will strike you down, and then Athena after that. Are you prepared?"

".... If I told you to wait, how long do you think you could give me?"

What method should I use to answer him?

He was at a loss of what he should have said, hence he had just blurted out whatever he had thought of.

"A warrior is always on the battlefield. Instantly rejecting the challenge, I cannot admire your imprudence. However, it's fine... The moon tonight is beautiful. I shall wait while savoring the sight of the moon. Once you have prepared, come to the place where we had fought last night!"

Looks like there was not going to be a problem.

Perseus sounded as though he wanted to draw in as large an audience as possible to watch their duel, he had to think of a way to change the venue - while Godou was thinking, Perseus continued,

"Then, I shall await your arrival..... Ah, one more thing. I do hope you arrive early. If I have finished my moon-gazing, I will head straight for your location, but as I thought, the place of a duel , if it is not the one both parties have agreed upon, it just won't feel right. I bid you farewell, for now."

His voice could no longer be heard.

No matter what they tried, there were no replies. Godou sighed deeply, *there's no way to postpone it further. What should I do? How can I win against that mighty hero?*

While Godou was ransacking his brain over this, Diana said,

"Kusanagi-sama, you do not seem sufficiently prepared.... I have a request to ask of you, would you please go outside for a while? Between us girls, we have a matter of extreme importance to discuss."

Being asked that by the oldest (of them) landlord, Godou complied.

While worrying about what to do, the lost Godou left, sighing.

- Really, what should I do?

Part 2

"We're running out of time, shall we begin the meeting? What methods should we use to allow Kusanagi-sama to achieve victory , let's start the meeting to decide that!"

"I have a suggestion. If Liliana-sama uses [Instruction], then everything will be resolved."

"That, is actually quite a good idea. Lily, is it ok if we leave that to you?"

"T, there's no way I can agree with that!"

Of the three persons remaining in the dining room, Diana had started off with the pending problem and Karen had replied with a simple and concise solution, and with that it felt like the discussion had ended.

And that was when Liliana started shouting like she was in her death throes.

"I, with Kusanagi Godou, ki-kissing and applying magic through it, it's unthinkable! Forget it, I cannot approve of that!"

"Earlier in the day, didn't you say that you will be helping him to the best of your ability?"

"L, let me make this clear first. That was referring to anything besides kissing! T, that.... how should I phrase it, that's not something a maiden should be doing, I think. I... and Kusanagi Godou, aren't anything like boyfriend and girlfriend, or lovers, we don't have such a relationship..."

Her face was fiery hot, she did not have any idea what she was saying, and her head was in a mess, but Liliana did not forget to retort.

"Furthermore, there are two other witches here, it doesn't have to be me!"

"I am unable to use [Instruction], hence you will have to count me out."

"Although I can use it, but I think it'll be better if Lily does it, because the one Athena had granted inspiration to was Lily after all. Having knowledge directly gained from that inspiration, a greater depth of understanding than others, wouldn't it be better to be passing on that knowledge to Kusanagi-sama?"

"Su, suitable mages from other places can be brought here, and then use [Instruction] on him..."

Even Liliana herself knew that she was being unreasonable, and did not finish her sentence.

What reasons did the three witches have for staying by Kusanagi Godou's side? In a fight against a god, no matter how many mages they were, they would not be of any help.

Unless they were mages of the highest rank, they would only be dragging the Campione down.

Hence, even if they knew that the god and the King were fighting, they would not come. A convention of the magical world, hence the mages that lived near Naples did not come.

And another thing to be mentioned was the special characteristics of Verethragna's ten forms.

There were conditions to be met in order to activate them, which were best kept secret.

Diana and Karen, they could be forced not to speak by Liliana's authority, but anyone else... He was a reckless person, hence they had to stay and help no matter what.

"Liliana-sama, please hear me out. I feel that you are making an unnecessary resistance."

To the Liliana who was repeatedly soliloquizing to herself, the sound of Karen's voice broke her out of her trance.

"Now, all that's left is for you to say, 'I'll do it'. If you still insist on not doing so, besides showing everyone that you cannot read the atmosphere, you will also be thought of as an obsolete woman.. ."

"Indeed, that's right - in the first place, Lily, why are you so against it?"

The youngest maid had finished her attack, then passing the baton to Diana.

"I feel that Kusanagi-sama, whether it is his personality or appearance, he's not bad, as a man. Only just one kiss with him wouldn't be a problem, don't you agree? Hmm?"

"There's a problem! A big problem!"

Liliana resisted in a loud voice against the senior witch who was happily discussing her personal matters.

"It is nothing much, a kiss. If you pretend that you are giving a goodnight kiss to your father-sama, and quickly get it over with, it would be fine."

"I agree. Or pretending to be having some skinship with your boyfriend. That would be ok too."

"That's why, I can't do it! I, if I have to give up my first kiss, it has to be to my destined partner in love, that I have decided!"

Liliana protested vigorously and loudly.

She had only just finished saying that when she realized her folly, and wanted to cover her face in regret.

Once, she had revealed the secret in her heart to Erica, and the usually graceful and composed Erica, had immediately burst out in roaring laughter.

[.... T, that was too much, Lily. If anyone saw me laughing like this, my rating as a lady will plunge for sure! B, but you're really, a maiden that's extinct in modern times, as I thought!]

Erica had said something along those lines, what kind of response would these two have?

Liliana anxiously awaited their response, Diana and Karen did not say a single word, merely silently looking at her - they were not smiling?

Slight surprise could be seen on their face, and then their faces had an expression that seemed to say, 'Aahh, as I thought'.

Why? She felt sad for herself, who had admitted this with her very own mouth, but Liliana Kranjcar felt that she was usually seen by others as a rough but heroic female knight, so why did the two of them have such an expression - ?

"U, umm, that.... I used to think that that would be nice, but actually, I didn't really mean it that seriously...."

It was clear to anyone that this was an attempt to cover it up, finding excuses, causing her to become even more nervous.

".... I see. I understand now, Lily! In that case, let me divine the compatibility between you and Kusanagi-sama!"

"N, no need to go that far."

Liliana refused Diana who had suddenly suggested that.

This witch whose age she refused to tell, seemed to have been a love fortune teller as a side occupation, and had told every couple that they were perfectly compatible, and that they would definitely obtain happiness. *Who would believe this kind of nonsensical fortune telling?*

"Destiny, is it..."

Even Karen was muttering to herself with a serious expression.

Not her usual little devil expression, but the opposite, giving off a foreboding omen. No one knew what she was scheming then.

"Liliana-sama, what is the ideal scenario of your destined love?"

"I, if you ask me that suddenly, I don't know how I should answer either.... anyway, if you really want me to say it, it would be a situation where everything is out to prevent the relationship between them, but no matter their distance, no matter how many times, the powerful bond of their love would bring the two of them back together."

Liliana hesitantly answered the sudden question.

Because these were the usual materials used for her fantasies, she could recite it with ease.

"Then, what about love between people of different backgrounds? Like the love between a King and a knight, for example."

".... T, that's not very popular nowadays, you can't say that it's destined."

This topic, was it a metaphor for Kusanagi Godou and her relationship?

I won't be falling for it, Liliana calmly said to herself - while in a corner of her mind, there was an intense thought of crossing social position and traditions, considering that classic relationship that struck her emotionally.

"A young man, rumored to have had his way with many women, had his heart stolen by a simple girl-next-door in a chance encounter, and thus changed his entire lifestyle for her.... what do you think about this scenario?"

"It's too convenient to be true. Such words from that kind of playboy, who could possibly believe them!"

Liliana shouted, rejecting that scenario instantly.

- With all of the women before you, everything that I've had with them was never real. Besides you, I need no other.

With an expression so serious that it was scary, the scenario and the youthful face which said that to her in her imagination, why was he an Asian, and why did he look so much like that boy she had been with for these two days?

"The two of them, while escaping danger together, helping each other, slowly becoming friends that do not dislike each other, and unwittingly became so close that no other person could wedge in between them, what about this scenario....?"

"That is merely the suspension bridge effect! Because of the unusual circumstances, they lost their ability to make cool-headed decisions!"

In the mind of Liliana who was still strongly resisting, appeared the memory of the crises both yesterday and that day.

The two of them, against a god, escaping the predicament...

She who was a knight had worried for him, and had wanted to protect him. What about him? He should know how to take care of himself, shouldn't he? Though the both of them were worried for each other in different ways, but with time, they would be able to solve all problems... and it felt like the both of them were rather compatible.

Furthermore, for a failed knight's sake, he had promised that goddess -

This was a debt she had to repay. Even if she had to offer her body.

...... On that subject, she had wanted to ask him, but had forgotten, whether Kusanagi Godou had wanted to win against that hero - Perseus.

If his answer was 'yes', then he would be needing all of Liliana's knowledge.

However, he had never said that he wanted to win, or that he wanted to use the [Sword].... does he mean to bear this entire burden by himself?

- Thinking that, Liliana suddenly felt an inexplicable feeling burst forth.

Kyun[23] Like little needles painfully pricking her heart - rather than painful, it was unbearable, but it contained the slight tinge of a feeling of sweetness. This was the first time she had felt such an unimaginable emotion.

An uncontrollable throbbing in her chest. A thumping heartbeat that won't stop.

"I, I'm going to see him for a bit! I'm worried about the effects of the drug - no, only slightly concerned, it's only that, don't get any weird thoughts!"

At this rate, she could no longer restrain herself.

Her mind full of thoughts, Liliana walked towards the guest room that Kusanagi Godou used.

"Certainly. Have a good evening."[24]

"Well then, we're counting on you, Lily."

(By the way, 'this girl, she fell for it!' was written on the faces of the scheming maid and the witch who dressed younger than her age as they smiled maliciously, but let us leave that aside first.)

Liliana arrived at the guest room that Kusanagi Godou should be residing in.

Opening the door - she found herself looking at an empty room, as though it were natural to be so. There was no mistaking it, there was not a single soul inside.

She hurriedly checked the rest of the rooms in the building in a panic, but he was already gone, nowhere to be found within the house. The young Campione had vanished from Diana's abode.

Part 3

Godou, who ultimately could not find an answer, boarded a public bus.

If it had gone on as it was, most likely the situation would have quickly escalated to using that method of transferring knowledge.

The numbness in his body fully gone, Godou seized the opportunity when the witches were discussing to slip out of Diana's house, and boarded the bus towards Santa Lucia district.

Aboard the bus that traversed the night of Naples shakily, Godou was agonizing over something.

Though he had already used that method many times in the past, and it might be a little too late to be saying it, but indeed, it was a method he hardly agreed with.

Sometimes he felt that it would become too complicated with Erica and Yuri, perhaps that was one of the reasons.

I have to sever the connections I have with this place, or else.... Fighting without having used that method, the difficulty was approaching 'impossible' from 'next to impossible'. He felt as if he had already lost before it even started.

Absentmindedly, he gazed outside the window.

The night was beautiful, but you could only truly understand that beauty when seen from higher ground.

.... At any rate, the duel with Perseus was already a fixed point in the future.

If he ran away, Athena would happily smile and cause Mount Vesuvius to erupt, it was a risk he would not take. If it came down to that, who knows how Naples and the surrounding region would end up like.

In a situation where he could not use the [Sword], how should he approach the fight?

In the end, he could not think of anything beyond that, it was back to square one for him.

- While considering those points, the public bus had stopped at a certain stop. Godou hurriedly got off the bus.

Nearby, there was both a train and a tram station, and they both stopped at somewhere nearby Santa Lucia harbor. Though it would only have required one stop on the train, but it would be better to think of something as he went there.

From Diana's house he had taken a map of the city, and had left afterwards.

"..... If only Erica was with me, then I wouldn't have needed to think this hard over this.... wait, what am I saying!"

He saw a public payphone on the road ahead -

In an instant, he thought of calling Erica's cellphone number, and he yelled out.

Up till now, he had always been saying not to use that method, yet if he were to call for help, and got Erica to come over - it would mean a decisive defeat for him.

However....

"I can't think of anything good, what should I do!?"

It was like when a writer had written nothing, and the deadline was almost up. Godou walked on, muttering, and before he knew it he was at the coastal road.

The smell of the tides drifted into his olfactory senses.

The murky black sea stretched out before him.

Facing a certain direction from the Santa Lucia harbor - east, to be precise, one could see the coast, an outline of an arc, and the many buildings that were constructed beside the coast, the harbor, and the many anchored vessels in the harbor itself.

Even further, one could see the ruins of the wrecked Egg Castle.

It was not far from the place where the golden haired hero was awaiting.

Godou heaved a deep sigh, with a feeling of 'oh, whatever', prepared to head there, and at that time.

".... You've not yet finished the preparations for the duel, may I ask where do you plan on going before then?"

A cold voice, from behind him.

Godou cautiously turned around. He was not sure since when, but the fairy-like Liliana Kranjcar was behind him.

"How did you find out where I was...?"

"I derived your approximate location using magic, and then using flight magic, flew to the general vicinity. If you wish to escape from a witch like me, you'll have to work harder."

Liliana explained concisely, and she seemed disappointed,

Godou sighed again, his knowledge of magic was simply too superficial.

"Let's go there together..... I would like to speak with you."

While saying that in a frightening tone, Liliana walked in the direction of the sea.

The coastal road during that time, had quite a fair bit of human traffic. There was a large greenified park nearby, and also many open-air stalls and small stores side-by-side, a street rife with activity.

It would indeed be inconvenient to be conversing on the road with so many goers.

.... *As I expected, is she here to preach to me?* Godou suddenly reminisced about being scolded by an intelligent-looking Yuri, and he made up his mind.

He would simply ignore those words, and find an opportunity to escape later.

Liliana who was oblivious to the thoughts currently flowing through Godou's head, asked, "Kusanagi Godou, do you wish to win in that battle ahead?"

"A, about that, of course I'd like that to happen, if it were possible. Because I am someone who hates losing at anything."

Godou replied while thinking.

He did not want to lose, but life would be easier if he could win by simply having a reason of 'not being able to lose'.

Remembering those sports programs on television, every time, the moment the Japanese representative team appeared the entire crowd would cheer and applaud. During those times, Godou would feel the sense of irony; the crowds cheering and roaring their support were excited and light-hearted, and on the other hand the participants had it really hard with the stress.

"If that's the case, then why did you not try your best, for the sake of victory?"

"Although, I really did want to try my best..."

Some things were out of one individual's control, left to fate. If it had been within his ability, then he would have done the most he could to find that chance at victory, but - reality was not so kind , Godou thought deeply.

In the end, if he did not have the assistance of Erica or Yuri, he was only a half-assed Campione.

He was called a 'King', yet he was powerless.

"You yourself should know what you need to do, to give me a command is all that is required. Perseus - the serpent-slaying hero that came from the east, Mithras. Just a 'bestow on me the knowledge of his secret' will do."

Mithras.

Just only hearing the name and a few bits of his background, was insufficient to understand his divinity.

Not knowing that would mean not being able to fight, he understood this very well. Even so, Kusanagi Godou could not bring himself to do it.

"I do not intend on doing so. It's true that I've obtained an inexplicable power from a god, but I am not someone who likes using that power, nor do I want to order others around to do things for me."

Godou finished saying, but Liliana shook her head.

"I've already said this before, the duty and responsibility of a [King] is only to do battle with the gods - the you of now is someone who is preparing for battle against a [Heretic God], fulfilling your responsibility, hence it is you whom we must obey, the possessor of our loyalty."

"It's fine even if you don't take that kind of thing seriously now. I'm only taking up this troublesome task because I'm the only one here who can."

If there were someone else willing to do it, Godou would happily give up his spot, there was no need to over elevate himself .

"Because there's no one else willing to, that's why I am, that's how simple the reason is, and the situation now is because of my own willfulness, although I also don't really like being called a ' King' - "

In the past, Kusanagi Godou had denied the fact that the Heretic God Verethragna was a hero.

After that, for some reason, he himself was told that 'You are a King', it was truly ridiculous. What that delusional youth god had said that time, right now, Godou was feeling the same way as he did then.

If someone said he was a King, then a King he was.

A King, isn't that a title for someone who had accomplished exaggerated amazing feats? The him of now was living in an environment where he was called that.

"For someone like me, I definitely do not wish for people to recognize me as a King. Nor would I want to be treated as one. I know very well what kind of person I am, no matter what others call me, I have no intention of changing myself!"

To call him 'stubborn' would not be wrong, to call him 'childish' , that would not be wrong either.

Godou had that degree of self-knowledge, why does he not display it - Liliana almost said that out loud. She froze for a moment, then emitted a small sigh.

"Honestly... You're such a hopeless person. A big idiot."

It was as she said.

He had nothing to say in defense, Godou felt a little guilty.

"Because you're so fixated over that, that's why you're hesitant about giving me an order?"

"Well, yeah... no matter how vital it is, being forced to do that kind of thing with me, you won't like it, right? Giving you an order to do that, is definitely a mistake."

Godou was a little embarrassed.

He was not the type of person to force others to what they did not want, but rather someone with a spirit of steel, nor was he an insensitive guy. The confident and brave him, had such a good-for-nothing side to him - Liliana was a little surprised.

"You leave me no choice... Then, let me tell you the method to solve the problem."

With a light sigh, Liliana slowly said.

She revealed a shy yet gentle expression to Godou.

Like this, she no longer seemed the fairy she usually was. With her softened-down chivalry and her beautiful face, she seemed just like a normal, gentle girl.

In that moment, Godou felt his heart being stolen by that expression. Immediately, he regained his composure.

What kind of method is that? He quietly awaited her answer.

"That is...." Liliana lightly whispered, her voice so small that he could not hear, and when he moved his ear closer, then - Godou had a big shock.

At the next moment, a warm feeling could be felt from his lips.

.... Liliana had kissed him, and when he returned to reality, it had been a few seconds.

"In other words, we'll just have to do this... I only have to kiss you."

After their lips had parted, Liliana said, blushing.

"Be, because you had said that there was no one else besides you who could battle against a god that you volunteered yourself, if that's the case, then I am the same, besides me, no one else can support you, that's why I have decided to lend you my aid to the best of my abilities.... And I don't dislike it."

"Eh?"

"That is... what we just did."

Is that true? Are those her true feelings, from the bottom of her heart?

Looking at the embarrassed face of Liliana, Godou was at a loss.

"It is a situation where even if you become an inhuman tyrant, you will be forgiven, and yet you still worry about the surroundings. Also you are careless at times, I feel that is a positive point, on the contrary."

No, the part about becoming a tyrant, it's better if there isn't a possibility of that happening.

Godou was a little guilty, if he misused the authorities of Verethragna, he would become just like those madmen Doni and Voban.

"It is because of me that we have fallen into this misfortune, but yet you did not blame me, not even a word. What's more, to protect me, you sacrificed yourself, in front of Athena...."

Misfortune, huh.... Objectively, that was not wrong.

However to Kusanagi Godou, misfortune like this was like bread-and-butter, he would not even spare a worry for it.

"Choosing someone like Erica to serve at your side, I feel that you don't have an eye for people, but as you are still young, it is difficult to fend off the wiles and tricks of that vixen. If you start to change now, there wouldn't be any problems... I shall help you!"

Eh? She didn't deny the rumor of me being a philanderer?

This was something he did not want to be accused of the most - at Godou who was thinking that, Liliana's face tensed up.

"The knight of the [Bronze-Black Cross], Liliana Kranjcar, swears that from now onwards, you shall be the master of my sword, and to you I shall offer my body and loyalty. Will you accept my oath?"

"To the extent of offering your loyalty, I'm not that kind of awesome person."

Hearing her declaration of her decision, Godou thought.

Regardless, if he did not give her a proper response, he would not be fit to be a man, and thus he nodded his head without any hesitation.

"If you will help me, and become my comrade, I'll be the first to give you a warm welcome... though I'm sure that I'll be causing you trouble, often - even so, is that fine with you?"

"I don't mind. I've already made up my mind, to endure the troubles."

The two of them gazed at each other.

Godou and Liliana finally went back to being able to look each other in the eye.

"I'm sure that you'll become a master worthy of my troubles, I look forward to it."

"Don't look forward to that too much, but I'll try my best.... Although that's a hard promise to keep."

"It would be best if there were results to show, but if you're willing to do your best, that is already enough. Areas where you are lacking, I will help you, lend you my assistance... With this blade, I will protect you, if you have need of knowledge on the gods, I will pass them over to you."

"Ah, aah."

The moment passing of knowledge was mentioned, Godou started to feel embarrassed.

In other words, he was going to do that with her.... he was thrown off by the surprise attack earlier, but still, that would not be good -

Sensing that Godou was wavering, Liliana let out a panicked voice.

"D, don't misunderstand, I'm doing it out of my duty as a knight, only that! I'm not like Erica. I won't become your lover in order to take advantage or something like that!"

"T, that's right. Of course I understand!"

"That's right.... Kusanagi Godou, I have a request to make as a knight. From now on, in order to lend you my aid, I plan on staying by your side as much as I can, so please rectify the people around you, and restructure your attitude, is that ok?"

"Ah - Ok. I don't think that'll be a problem."

"From now on, our relationship as a knight and a King will be like a pair of birds flying wing to wing, branches of the same tree entwined together. There will be times when our opinions diverge, times that we do not place our faith in each other.... but we will overcome these hardships, allowing the bonds between us to grow even stronger - let us become a pair like that. That is our oshidori's pledge."[25]

"... I understand. Anyway, let's get along well, from now on."

Liliana's oath earlier, there were many unsuitable terms and phrases that were used with regards to the current situation -

Although Godou thought that way, he felt that it did not really matter, so he just let it slide.

There were no problems in conversation and communication, but after all, they came from drastically different cultures, hence if he pointed out each and every one of her mistakes in the language, it would be too uncool of him.

"Then, my master - I have a request.... Please, kiss me."

"Eh?"

The world around Godou froze.

The female knight stared unhappily at her nonreactive master.

"Surely you don't expect me to kiss you one more time!? Actions like this, are initiated by the male party!"

".... Th-That's not it. How can we be doing it on the street?!"

"We only just did it earlier, what are you talking about. Pl, please look around you.... If it's just kissing, no one will pay us any heed in this vicinity."

Liliana explained shyly, Godou looked to and fro around - he finally understood.

The lively coastal street. At night. Full of couples.

And, the closer it was to the sea, the darker it was. With these conditions, couples would naturally gravitate towards those areas, and engage in activities like kissing -

"W, we've already gone that far, are you still going to hesitate over it!?"

"What hesitate, rather you should say that the Ethics Committee inside my heart won't give me the permission to do such a thing!"

"If it's permission you need, I'll give it to you... I, I feel that you have the right intentions, and furthermore you are my master.

Also.... I don't want to see you lose, nor do I want to see the sight of you falling to the ground, pierced by Perseus' arrow once more."

Unknowingly, Liliana had gotten closer.

She moved her slender body close to Godou, and then tightly glued her body onto his, looking upwards at him with teary eyes.

"For my sake... and for the sake of victory, please do your best. I'm begging you."

Liliana asked, her slightly pale lips trembling.

- For the sake of victory.

The meaning of that, was something, Godou had no resistance against. Yes, he had already, by Perseus - the god with the name of Mithras which he had never heard of, been defeated.

Liliana in a soft voice, told him that she wished for him to triumph over that man, and she was a beautiful girl herself.

To the point that people would wonder whether she was a human or a fairy, a slender and beautiful appearance, but was surprisingly serious, easy to talk to, and at times come up with very strange delusions, she was a cute girl like that.

When he had a real feeling of that fact, he had already sealed her lips with his.

Their lips met.

When their lips parted, Liliana looked displeased, as if aggravated.

"T, that's not enough. More... please do more."

Having come this far, there was no other way but to continue.

It was the first time that he had, out of his own volition, initiated a kiss. Having steadied his resolve, he kissed her once again, tightly embracing Liliana.

This moment, the knowledge flowed.

- That is the incarnation of the sun, the hero from the east.

- The sword god of serpent slaying steel, as the Invincible Emperor, the King that reigns over light.

It connected.

Between Liliana and Godou, the constructed truth was connected.

Their lips parted once again, but this time Liliana was silent. The two of them nodded at each other.

"The god that you had defeated, Verethragna, was a divinity that had an extremely complicated background."

Liliana who seemed as though she was kissing Godou's neck, spoke as she drew closer.

"Before being a Yazata of Zoroastrianism, he hailed from ancient Persia, as a god of light and contract, Mithra, the war god." [26]

Liliana who was softly speaking into his ear caused him to feel at ease.

Just by doing that, he felt the connection strengthen.

"There was also this myth.... When Mithra punished the sinners who defiled their code, he would take the form of a pitch-black boar, crushing them, and the boar is one of the ten forms of Verethragna."

The cool, chivalrous female knight spoke in a dream-like, gentle voice.

She placed the entire weight of her body onto Godou, and peacefully closed her eyes.

"The reason they share the same appearance - because Mithra is the root divinity of Verethragna, and Mithra who was originally a war god, with the passing of time, the divine nature of being a god of light and contract intensified, and the one which continued his increasingly weakening nature of being a war god was Verethragna."

A quiet voice that only one could hear.

Like a lullaby, or the pillow talk of a couple, slowly penetrating into Godou's ears.

"From the violent aspect of Mithra's soul, Verethragna was created, and at the same time inheriting the divine nature of Indra. Indra was an Indian storm god that was regarded in Persia as a demon, and only the divine nature was inherited by Verethragna."

Mithra, Indra. Sacred names that somehow seemed nostalgic.

It might have been the memories that were awakened by the sleeping divine power of Verethragna that was inside Godou's body. Without a doubt, after that he had merged with Hercules that was from the east, becoming an undefeatable war god.

"Tracing the roots of Mithra and Indra, would lead you back to the Indo-European ethnicity in the east - the war god that was born from the Aryans, specifically that Mithra's old name was Mitra, who was regarded by the Aryans as the most important divinity, alongside Varna. That god was the origin of Mithra, the god who came to the west."

At this point, Liliana was suddenly silent.

What happened?

Puzzled, Godou looked at the silver-haired girl who was tightly hugging him, and she immediately lowered her head shyly, avoiding his gaze, and said in a small voice,

"L, let's continue. What we did earlier... was not enough... that, um, if you do not kiss me more - "

Her fair skin had turned red, from her face to her neck, and she asked in a trembling voice.

Seeing Liliana in such a cute attitude, Godou's doubts in his heart were chased away, it would not be good to let her say those things to him again.

He moved his face closer, and stole her lips once more.

An awkward but forceful kiss.

At the start Liliana's body stiffened up, but soon she relaxed, and accepted Godou's unskillfully moving lips, and opened up her cherry-colored lips as though she was about to swallow the other party.

Single-mindedly assaulting Godou's lips, unceasingly kissing each other, their feelings deepening.

... For the purpose of catching their breath, their lips separated.

Godou saw that Liliana was looking at him drowsily, perhaps he might have looked the same. Her embarrassment and ecstasy causing her body to tremble, with her tearful eyes and tender lips, before she could say a word, Godou sealed her lips again.

- Pompey, the military genius, who made an alliance with Caesar.

- It was said that when he suppressed the pirates of Asia Minor, he had witnessed with his own eyes strange customs and practices.

- The pirates had to make offerings to Mount Olympus in Lycia, held unbelievable secret rituals, and this practice had survived till the present times, with the worshipers of Mithras.

"This was a record left by Plutarch in [Parallel Lives], something that migrated from the east to the west, from the hero that came from Persia, this is the divinity of Perseus, he who was called the Invincible Sun arrived in England, a rarity of a hero that crossed the lengths of the world."

Through their overlapping lips, Liliana's knowledge was passed on to Godou's mind.

Perhaps she was a little shy, she would occasionally withdraw her lips and whisper softly, but Godou did not let her speak, and pressed his lips on hers continually.

"Yo, you can't... If you do that, I'll...."

Had he been too forceful? The troubled Liliana resisted slightly.

However, with those moist trembling lips, even while feeling embarrassed, she accepted Godou's all the same.

Liliana, as though wanting to suck in Godou's lips, opened up her own.

"This is a magic ritual.... Preparation in order to battle a god, so please take this more seriously.... don't fool around..."

The saliva from the Liliana's mouth, moistened Godou's lips.

She seemed to be troubled by the sound of the saliva, sucking slowly on Godou's lips, and she moved her tongue as though wanting her saliva back.

The saliva that flowed from Liliana's lips, were sucked into Godou's mouth.

Through their tongues, the exchange of saliva, and both a feeling of sweetness and knowledge filled their minds.

- The chains that tied Perseus and Mithras together. The appearance of the hero from the east.

- From the east, came not only the hero, yes, so did the Sun, rising from the east.

- In other words, the incarnation of the Sun that came from the east, was the meaning behind Perseus' name.

"Deeper... If we don't establish a deeper connection... I will not be able to impart onto you, we are already more intimate than any other King and knight, anyone else, even Erica cannot say a thing... that's why... we can..."

Her cheeks a shade of deep red, Liliana spoke quickly.

She immediately closed her eyes and pressed her lips forward, sucking with greater force than before.

She wanted to feel deeply, no matter how, and Godou opened his lips to embrace Liliana's, and this time, her trembling tongue entwined around Godou's.

A slippery feeling like that of wet bodies coming into contact, she was slightly restless, and Godou parted from her lips for a moment.

... If this goes on, they might reach a point of no return.

Because of that feeling, the two of them stopped their kissing, and a strand of saliva formed a thin bridge between their lips, and they looked into each other's eyes.

She used those intoxicated-looking eyes of hers to gaze at Godou.

Her eyes were unfocused, something he could never imagine looking at her usually clean and neat demeanor, adorable to the point of causing one's back to shiver, an alluring expression of a female.

The amount of people who have seen this expression on this girl was definitely only one.

Absolutely convinced of that, Godou cast aside his confusion.

Soon, the silent Liliana lightly nodded her head, looked into his face, sensing his desires.

"I, it's fine if we do it the way you prefer, you know? I, I want to do it with you too, faster, ki, kiss... that's why, that's why, more - "

There was no need for more words.

Yet another forceful kiss, he no longer held back.

Liliana intensely sucked upon Godou's invading tongue.

Their tongues entwined again and again, exchanging their saliva, moistening their lips, each of them confirming the softness of the other's lips.

Like that, they continued their longest kiss -

Finally, Godou had pieced together all of the knowledge of the divinity that originated from Persia.

The warrior from the east, the incarnation of the Invincible Sun, the serpent-slaying hero of steel, Godou had obtained the words of power to rend apart this enemy hero.

In the end, how much time had they spent being lost in the activities here?

She did not know how long exactly, but when Godou had suddenly come back to his senses, he quickly withdrew from her lips, but both his and Liliana's were already fully wet.

Liliana's beautiful face had already returned to normal and was her usual composed self again, but was still trembling slightly out of shyness.

No matter how many couples there were here, they had still overdone it.

Whether it were the other couples who were hugging each other tightly like them, or the road-side stall staff or customers, all of them were watching the two of them, snickering and chuckling to themselves.

Godou and Liliana's line of sight overlapped.

In Japan, if you engaged eye contact it would be best if you disengaged as soon as possible, but this was the passionate Latin kingdom.

Some people from the surrounding were whistling, some gave them a thumbs-up, others were simply smiling at them - it had become such a scene.

" - !?! Ku, Kusanagi Godou, let's leave quickly!"

"T, that's right, Liliana-san! That guy must have waited for quite a while!"

They quickly escaped from that area, half-walking and half-running.

The destination was - Egg Castle, the battle was about to start soon. *Calm down!* Godou chided himself.

"H, how is it? Do you think you have a chance?"

Liliana had been considering the same, and their conversation returned to reality.

"To be honest, I don't know. Although I have the [Sword] that can rend him, but that guy can also seal my power, if you consider only the abilities, that guy has the advantage."

"But you seem calm. Do you have any trump cards up your sleeve?"

"It's nothing special, but Athena has said it before, no matter what the odds are, in a fight between gods there are no definites, hence our battle against the god should be the same, just let me try - no, let me defeat him."

As they moved, they focused their wills on the upcoming battle ahead.

Seeing Godou's show of courage, Liliana shrugged her shoulders.

"You are indeed reckless, but no matter, I will assist you to the best of my abilities, and I have one last request."

"What is it?"

"Just 'Liliana' will do, if I'm different from Erica in this way, honestly, I can't take it."

"... Normally, adding 'san' when you address someone is more respectful, isn't it?"

"That's just formality. B, because we already have a relationship where we have done those kind of things, there's no need to be so formal, right!?"

"I, I got it. Then, I shall call you that from now on...!"

Liliana's stuttering had caused him to recall the earlier events, and the pair advanced towards the battleground where the One who came from the East, Mithras (Perseus) awaited.

Part 4

The devil king of east Europe, Marquis Dejanstahl Voban.

He had struck down Apollo who possessed many varied authorities, obtaining the authority of wolves, [Legion of Hungry Wolves]. And Salvatore Doni had obtained from the Celtic god king Nuadha, [Ripping Arm of Silver].

Their personalities were extremely similar to their authorities, overly suited for each other.

" - These are good examples, hence I theorize that a Campione's authorities are a reflection of the possessor's personality and skill, and then compatibility level, other than that it would be for the purpose of absorbing the massive divine power into the human body of the Campione, hence there is no choice but to sever certain parts away. I feel that it is during this process that the authority would go through allocation adjustments."

Those were the thoughts of Erica Blandelli hours ago that were stated, while on the vessel.

The high-speed craft was moving through the Tyrrhenian Sea at night.

In the cabin of the twelve-meter long high-speed craft that weighed twenty tons, she explained to her audience that consisted of Andrea Rivera and Mariya Yuri.

- After being messed up by Salvatore Doni.

The injured Erica had, with great pains, undid the knots on Rivera and Yuri.

Regaining their freedom, they had hastily went off in pursuit of Doni.

But it had been too late, the [King of Swords] who had already prepared a high-speed craft and crew in advance had embarked on the journey long ago.

At any rate, they had to reach Naples as soon as possible. Erica, Yuri and Rivera rented a suitable vessel and departed immediately .

Their destination was the location of the battle between Kusanagi Godou and the [Heretic God].

When Doni's spell was broken, they had verified the situation through the phone, contacting the responsible party for resolving the incident in Naples, the witch Diana from the [Bronze-Black Cross].

Diana had told them as well, the one assisting Godou was the Great Knight Liliana Kranjcar.

Ability wise there was no doubt that she was highly-skilled.

But the fact that she was not beside Godou at the moment left Erica anxious to no ends. However, no matter how anxious she was, she could do nothing while on the boat.

Erica, who wanted to get rid of that uneasiness, had simply started on that aforementioned topic she had thought of.

"Miss Erica's assumptions have no basis, nor is there any supporting evidence, hence there is no meaning in it, academically speaking. However, as a personal opinion, it is a rather sound theory."

The serious Rivera had refuted her and agreed with her at the same time.

Yuri who was at the side wanted to say something.

"May I interject a bit? Regarding Sir Salvatore and Marquis Voban, what Erica-san had said made sense... but how would you explain Godou-san's situation?"

"Now that you mention it, he's almost fully capable of utilizing all ten forms of Verethragna."

"Yes. You say that personality and compatibility levels are what affects a Campione's authorities, but I don't think that he is at that level..."

Yuri's voice trailed off, and she tilted her head slightly.

Erica nodded her head, in actual fact, that problem had been bugging her for these few months.

"That's true. What Yuri had said is not wrong, but if you put it this way, maybe it would make sense... In simple terms, because of Godou's generosity, a personality that treats anyone as a good friend, that is why he is able to use all of the forms."

Without a doubt, he was a youth who treated everyone friendlily and familiarly.

But to the people whom he had opened his heart to, he was extremely bighearted, to the point that people would think he's an idiot. He was always sincere to and trusting of others, the memory of him being severely messed around by Lucretia at the start of the vacation remained firmly in her mind.

Another good example was, he got along well with that Genaro guy.

Rude and rough, violent and cunning, and a fanatic of Japanese children cartoons, a depressing man who could debate furiously about anime, that kind of person could actually get all familiar with Godou.

"I see, that's one way to look at it... Well, there's no way that this issue can be proven, pursuing it would be meaningless, although it is quite an interesting topic."

Rivera answered seriously, and Yuri nodded in agreement.

"That's true. If it was just as Erica-san had said, then a lot of inexplicable things could be explained."

The Hime-Miko smiled.

Till now, whenever they spoke of Godou's safety, everyone had sunk into a gloomy mood, but the atmosphere was slowly lightening up, perhaps it might be due to the recollection of his pure and kind personality.

"Yuri is too naive.... Though I don't dislike that part of Godou, because it's cute, and teasing him is also fun, but isn't this a big problem?"

"Problem?"

"That guy doesn't just treat guys that way, he treats girls in the same manner, if the other party is a female, even if he did not strike up a conversation or deepen their relationship by his initiative, the female side would slowly adjust her pace to suit his and shorten the distance between them. Remember the situation when we had Lucretia."

If the other party was a girl that did not dislike him, and was even aware of his presence.....

This situation was a little too dangerous, even if Godou did not approach her, she would of her own accord approach him, and he would not reject nor distance away from her.

Throw in a few misunderstandings and a bit of luck, and adding the factor of an encounter with a divinity...

"T, that... If it's Godou-san... ah, no, it's because it's Godou-san that the danger of him stepping into a strange situation...!?"

Yuri seemed like she had thought of the same problem Erica did , and became very flustered.

After that, what she worried about was Liliana Kranjcar - Erica's rival and childhood friend, the report that she was currently assisting Godou at his side.

It was hard to imagine something suspicious happening between that old-fashioned maiden and Godou.

But her heart was throbbing strangely.

If something complicated develops between Godou and Liliana, what should I do. Erica, the devil who liked to tease others, revealed a slightly unhappy expression, her brows locked in a frown.

Chapter 7 - Unruly Devil King, Sun's Hero

Part 1

He was walking under the night sky in Naples.

Bringing with him Liliana Kranjcar, Kusanagi Godou finally arrived at Santa Lucia district, and they slowly made their way on foot through the bustling street.

Even though there had been such a huge commotion the previous day, the crowds still filled the streets.

If this were Japan, it would definitely have become as deserted as a boat on the verge of sinking, that even the rats would be gone. As expected of Italy, and the residents of Naples famous for their optimism.

Godou was strolling in that city.

The one who had an appointment with him here was that handsome hero-sama, but he should be drawing closer from the other side too. *If you're going to come, come out faster.*

His mind thinking over that, the sound of a flute reached his ears.

A flute, but the sound did not seem to be the clear sound of an instrument, but rather a simple nostalgic feeling, leaving people with a deep impression, it was a sorrowful yet incredible melody.

Godou looked towards the crowds.

Towards the source of the melody.

It was shocking to see the handsome youth standing in the middle of the crowd, blowing a grass whistle.

The people, who had noticed this performance, had quickly cleared away and made way for him.

Their behavior was almost like they had only noticed the sound of the flute for the first time. No, surely that was the case. The beautiful youth [Heretic God]'s divine power must have had something to do with this.

Using his majesty as a god, causing the humans to give way of their own volition.

Those who laid their eyes upon him, wore a trance-like expression.

An appearance that caused people to feel that he was cosplaying, the handsome youth dressed in pure white. But somehow, he gave off the impression of someone special, a sacred existence, a result of the innate charm of a god.

"Well met again, godslayer. You've kept me waiting."

The hero smiled.

Godou walked towards him, with Liliana following behind. The surrounding people parted and gave way, hence it was not too much of a task to arrive right before Perseus.

"How should I address you from now? Should I continue calling you Perseus?"

"...Ho."

Perseus, like a brilliant sun, revealed a smile on his beautiful face. He threw aside the grass whistle which was a leaf from some unknown tree, and replied,

"Have you discovered my secret? Did Athena tell you?"

"That's how it is. I never expected that a god would lie when giving his name."

"If you'll allow me to explain, that isn't a false name, as I have many different names. The 'One who came from the East' is an especially famous one... I had concluded that this name is the most widely accepted one, nowadays."

He smiled like someone who had played a trick.

Even with this kind of expression, he was still very charming, truly, this beautiful youth was a despicable character.

"I will not allow you to use my other name casually, it's fine if you continue to address me as Perseus... you might be surprised to know this, but I'm someone who likes to be in the spotlight."

Totally not surprising. Though our time together has been short, Godou already knew this very well.

Godou, tensing his muscles, took no notice of Perseus' refusal.

This man who liked playing tricks - the one who wanted to be referred to as Perseus, was very strong. If he did not fight with all his might, it would not even be close to a fair fight.

And, for that purpose, they had to change the location of the battle.

He was the one who wanted to do it in front of an audience, so it was inevitable; but, as he thought, they had to avoid having the public stand so close.

They had to fight in a wider place.

"... If that's the case, I think there's a better place to do this. A place wider, bigger, which would catch the eye of more people, and allow them all to watch our battle."

"Ho?"

"Since we're going to do battle, let's do it there... Liliana, please lead the way."

Nodding her head with a simple 'Understood.', Liliana took the lead.

The new location for their duel had already been decided when the two of them were making their way here in a discussion.

Behind the chivalrous and calm female knight, the Campione and handsome god followed.

On the bustling street of Naples, even though it was nighttime, it was still very bright.

The three of them walked on the road, the goers automatically giving way, because they were attracting a large amount of attention -

Is something special going to happen?

The surrounding people had such a question hanging on their faces, looking towards them.

They proceeded under the gaze of the crowds, like a wrestler making his way to the ring, and the wrestler would try to display his power on the way.

... It was hard to believe that this small journey would end up becoming so epic.

Godou was rather stressed out over this unexpected development.

"I see, this was quite the good suggestion. If it's this place, the masses would be able to properly appreciate our battle, it's a great place for our final showdown!"

Inspecting the location Liliana had brought them to, Perseus nodded, satisfied.

It was a particularly famous tourist sightseeing attraction, in the Santa Lucia district.

- Piazza del Plebisito. It was a semi-circle shaped plaza, with a great view.

In this plaza, there were two buildings of historical significance.

The church of San Francesco di Paola.

Palazzo Reale Di Napoli. In other words, the royal palace of Naples.

Adjacent to the royal palace were one of the three great opera houses of Italy, Teatro San Carlo, and also Castel Nuovo, a castle constructed during the same age as the Castel dell'Ovo.

In short, this was a random collection of famous sites.

Hence, even in the night, there were many people, but when Perseus had entered the plaza, they had in turn maintained their distance.

The people formed a large circle around the perimeter, wanting to see what happens next.

It was as though this were a movie shoot with many extras.

In this situation, Godou was like the one playing the villain, about to do battle with the good-looking protagonist, as he followed behind Perseus, embarrassed.

Halfway through, they had to force their way through the crowd, and his eyes met with Liliana's, who was in the front row.

Her immediate nodding of her head in response was reassuring.

- Thus, the god and the Campione stood in the center of attention, in the middle of the square, facing each other.

Perseus summoned his sword out of thin air.

On the other side, Godou was barehanded.

This time, he should not choose an incomplete weapon. Against the hero who was victorious yesterday, he had to go all out in his first attack, which meant that he should pick -

"To not use your other name casually.... You did say that, right? "

Even the simplest of words could be turned into words of power, a sacred sword.

The golden secret sword that rend gods.

However, the trump card that was his strongest weapon, to what extend could its potential be reached this time?

His other forms having been sealed, anticipating that the [Sword] would be an exception, this way of thinking was somewhat weak. Yet, he did not care, he would simply go ahead.

"Excuse me, but I will not be able to do that. I'll say this first.... the One who came from the east, the Invincible Sun Heliogabalus - you who possesses many aliases, the name that you conceal is Mithras, the sun god born on winter solstice. That is the other you! "

At that moment, Godou reinforced his resolve, and in one breath, pulled out the [Sword].

Enveloping the surrounding in light, the words from his mouth becoming words of power, and the light spheres that turned golden, it as the weapon used by the [Warrior], the last form of Verethragna - the spell words of the [Sword].

"The hero of light, Mithras. This is the name you have hidden!"

He started with the restrained first sword.

Godou controlled the many lights of the [Sword], and slashed towards Perseus/Mithras. In return for that arrow the day before, he did not hold back at all.

"Hoho - you had concealed such an ability? Hahaha, truly magnificent!"

The Mithras who called himself Perseus moved, at a speed like a white panther.

Instantly jumping back, dodging the sword of light.

"You were originally known only as Perseus - the Man who came from the East, the stranger who had saved the princess Andromeda from the giant serpent, a serpent-slayer and a skilled swordsman... originally you were only thus."

Godou, who had caused Perseus to step back, extended the [Sword].

Countless lights like the stars, illuminated the entire plaza, each and every of those lights weapons to kill Perseus/Mithras.

"Since ancient times, the serpent - and the dragon, the heroes that fought these were many, and you were one of the prime examples. A hero who struck down the serpent and saved the beautiful maiden. What were their reasons for doing battle with the serpents? This was because serpents and dragons which were, by the former rulers of the divine world, the great goddesses of the land - they had reduced them to these forms due to their evil nature."

Now, Godou's mind still had the knowledge of the time when Athena was still a goddess of the land.

If he did not begin to understand from this part, he would not be able to understand the nature of the [Serpent-Slayer]. In the primeval world that these goddesses had been worshipped as the highest of gods, the [Lady] had possessed the most authority. This was knowledge that had been gained from that time when he fought against Athena.

This wisdom was shaped into words of power, into the radiance of the [Sword].

In order to make keen this radiance, Godou continued to chant the words of power.

"The Queens of the divine world struck down those that were known as demonic beasts. The result was the collapse of the world where the goddesses reigned, and with that came the world where warriors with bronze and metal weaponry reigned. With the coming of an age where military strength ruled the countries, and the mission of the heroes of steel like you, was to carve out such a new world of violence!"

The preparations were done, what would the result be like?

In response to Godou's words of power, the light spheres that circled around Perseus began to speed up.

"Hm - Is this something like those flight implements? What strange words of power."

The hero murmured to himself, his interest piqued.

The sword in his hand vanished, and in its place appeared a longbow, along with a quiver on his back, of course, within the quiver were multiple tens of arrows.

"If that's the case, then I shall exchange blows with you by my bow. Come, let us see whose technique reigns supreme!"

In contrast to Perseus who was giving off a manly smile, Godou did not have that kind of allowance.

Desperately chanting the words of power, he gathered his [Sword].

"I am the dragon of injustice, the strongest and the most wicked of butchers! The sword that protects the men and women of righteousness, obey me!"

An infinite amount of light spheres answered Godou, gathering, forming tens of swords.

A golden formation of swords.

The swords were aimed directly at Perseus, surrounding him from all sides.

"In that case, by the sun that rises from the east, grant me strength! Bestow upon me the strength to crush my comrade Verethragna!"

Perseus had also begun chanting his own words of power.

A halo appeared behind him, standing as proof of the Man from the East's identity as the sun god.

That light was a powerful ability that he had gained from Mithras, the god who came from the east that had assimilated into

Roman mythology, which was also the origin of the troublesome ability that could seal Verethragna.

Godou made up his mind, and in a single breath, released the golden [Sword].

"Right now, I have borrowed the divine protection of the sun, to fire this one arrow. Young godslayer, a light, when present before another yet whose radiance surpasses its own will lose its splendor , learn this lesson well!"

At the same time, Perseus fired an arrow towards the moon in the sky.

The single arrow soared high into the heavens - and then split into hundreds of lights that bathed the ground, and the [Sword] that was hit by the rain of light dissolved, much like an ice cube beneath a hot summer sun.

".... As I thought, this won't work? That's really a troublesome ability."

Godou griped about his opponent's troublesome power.

How is it? Perseus who had said that to him puffed out his chest. His childishness was overflowing, yet his charm and charisma as a hero did not diminish.

Strong to the point of causing others to click their tongues.

Though his comprehensive capabilities could not be thought of to be higher than Athena's, Godou's affinity against him was comparatively worse than with Athena. As long as he carried the aspect of Mithras, the hero of light, any attack against him was ineffective.

- Even so, Godou did not plan on going down without a fight.

He renewed his assault.

If the opponent's ability was troublesome, then he would just have to seal it first. If that plan did not work, then he would have no chance at victory. At any rate, it was better than hesitating.

In order to revive the [Sword] that had partially disappeared, he continued to chant the words of power.

"The second name that you've hidden - Mithras. The place that this divinity was worshipped, reigning over the center of the world, is the Roman Empire that we all know of. The people of that country worshipped the divinities that were introduced from foreign places, becoming new religions, a broad-minded and perfunctory inclination."

Yes, gods introduced from foreign places.

For example Cybele from Asia Minor, Isis from Egypt, and even Moses.

The early Roman Empire had introduced many different gods from many different places, prophets and beliefs, and then reinforced it with their own adjustments, and the origin divinities had turned into gods which were filled with the style and culture of Rome.

Among those gods, Mithras was included.

"The foreign god Mithras' homeland was Persia, to the east of Rome, and another god that also came from the east, Helios - the Greek sun god that had its own palace at the end of the east, the god that was called 'Sol' in Rome!"

Continuing to speak out words of power crafted from the origins of the hero, the light of the [Sword] began to intensify again.

Likewise, the halo behind Perseus glowed brighter and brighter.

He raised his longbow once more, nocked an arrow, any further and it would be a repeat of earlier. However - !

"The [Sun God] that was one and the same as [One who came from the east]. The careless Roman people, unintentionally, had thought of Helios as Mithras, and then with yet another [The Man from the East] - Perseus, was added into the mix!"

If the power of Mithras could seal Verethragna, then he would have to start from that point.

Even if it meant using the words of power of the [Sword]. If he could not succeed at this, then the outcome would be decided, there was no room for hesitation.

Like professional gamblers who have gone all-in, Godou would decide everything with this.

The overflowing light from the words of power. The [Sword] that had been bestowed upon him by Liliana, expanded significantly.

"The Man from the East - what was hidden beneath this name was, the ancient Romans that had combined the Greek hero Perseus with Helios, and also the Persian sun god as one entity, only the Romans who had loose and generous religious beliefs, could be capable of performing this drastic move. You are not the hero of the ancient Greeks...! In the Roman Empire that did not have a single unified belief of the gods, you are just an emergent hero god!"

"Fufu, though you have a way with your words, but what should be useful on the battlefield is a weapon of steel!"

Perseus who had been surrounded by a multitude of [Swords] fired an arrow again.

The rings of the [Sun] behind his back flared up brilliantly.

The released arrow turned into a thousand shafts of light that burst forth, and the [Sword] was vanquished immediately. However, at the same time, Godou continued to create new swords.

The target of the [Sword], from Perseus to Mithras - to be narrowed down.

"Why is my power of Verethragna largely ineffective against Mithras? The answer is simple. The god who came from the east Mithras, his origin could be traced back to Mitra - Verethragna's master!"

The secret of the gods that Liliana had told him.

Before the appearance of Verethragna, the previous [Persian Warlord] was the sun god Mitra. Whether it was in Latin or Greek, his name would be read as Mithras.

Guessing what Godou was aiming for, Perseus fired off another arrow.

Though he only saw Perseus firing off one lone arrow, but from this arrow alone, burst forth tens of arrows of light that pierced the [Swords], and what was like the stars of the starry sky disappeared one by one.

However, the [Sword] that were converted from targeting Perseus to Mithras were untouched.

Though the amount was not much, what remained was still about a quarter of the original amount.

"The leader of the ancient east, Mitra, who was your original form, the power with the capability to seal the god Verethragna! That's why firstly, I have to sever that power of the sun!"

The spell words of the [Sword] had almost run out, hence Godou released the remainder in a single breath.

Godou extended his hand towards the precious weapon, and the gathering golden light formed into a giant sword, and the divine sword of gold was created.

"Verethragna, rejecting the rule of the King of the Sun? Don't get ahead of yourself!"

Knowing that he was about to lose that absolute advantage of his, Perseus yelled out in a loud voice.

"Truly you are my sworn enemy, godslayer! ....Hahaha, although I had forgotten about it, I'll take this opportunity to ask you! Godslayer, tell me your name, Perseus will hereby acknowledge you as the man who became my sworn enemy, I will remember it well!"

"My name is Kusanagi Godou! But, I don't think there's a need for you to remember it!"

"No, I have already fully committed it to my memory, now let us continue our battle!"

The hero excitedly shouted his reply to Godou's introduction of his name.

Are the heroes of old all the same as him? If that's the case, I definitely don't want to get to know them better. I'm not Salvatore Doni, to be able to chat and drink beer with people whom I have been slashing away at as enemies an hour earlier. It's regrettable, but I don't have this kind of interest. Realizing the cultural gap between him and the god, Godou tightly gripped a golden sword.

He continued to forge the [Sword] that was meant to rend Mithras.

"Your peak was before the beginning of the third century, the time when Heliogabalus became the Emperor of the Roman Empire, he was a tyrant of extreme decadence. Heliogabalus then impersonated the name of Mithras, threw aside the ancient gods of Rome, and became your highest priest!"[27]

"Correct, Kusanagi Godou! You knew even that!"

While answering, he fired off arrows of light.

Godou moved the [Sword] slightly, waving it and fending them off.

"However he was assassinated by his own guards, ending his rule in merely four years. Even though you were a god worshipped by the Emperor, you could not stand at the summit of the gods. In replacement, the Son of God[28] with the heart of compassion took your place as the target of the religions' worship, conquering the religious world of the Romans!"

313 AD, the legalization of Christianity by the Milan Edict.

It was an opportunity, for the once persecuted Christianity to become the state religion of both the eastern and western Roman Empire. The tables were turned, and they arrogantly branded other religions of divinities as [Paganism], persecuting them, and included amongst these, was of course the Invincible sun god.

- Therefore, these words of power would be the last sword to finish off Mithras.

Godou as though brandishing his sword, threw his weapon towards Perseus. The golden sword flew, like an arrow, straight and true,

Perseus used his longbow to guard against the assault.

However, Godou's sword destroyed the longbow, and the sword of golden light embedded itself in the hero's powerful body.

In the next second, there was an explosion of pure light.

The powerful shockwave sent both Godou and the hero flying through the air.

Part 2

The amount of time the two of them were down for, were a few tens of seconds.

"... To have severed the [Mithras] that is contained within my body? Though the method wasn't magnificent, it was still quite impressive, Kusanagi Godou!"

Exhilarated, the hero picked himself up.

Now, the only name remaining for him was 'Perseus'. Before the damage is recovered, the name of 'Mithras' that was severed by the [Sword] had no meaning.

Seeing the energetic figure before him, Godou surreptitiously nodded his head.

That previous attack was the [Sword] that slew Mithras, and just as he thought, it did no damage against the divinity of Perseus , but that could not be helped, as he could not have asked for a better outcome.

Furthermore, he had been lucky beyond his expectations.

Previously, when he had changed the [Sword]'s target from Apollo to Osiris in his attack, he suffered from an immense fatigue due to that, but this time round he did not feel any of the aftereffects. It was probably because he did not force himself as much as that time, when he forcefully changed the nature of the ability.

- While he was thinking, Perseus started to move.

When he had noticed it, Perseus had appeared right in front of him, and then grabbed his left arm, casually flinging him aside, sending Godou flying.

" - Guha! What ridiculous strength...!"

Godou smashed into a white stone pillar.

Fortunately his head was not the point of impact, but his back was partially embedded into the wall.

In the Piazza Plebiscito which had become a battlefield, this was between two historical buildings, San Francesco di Paola church and the royal palace of Naples.

At the facade of the former, the church, there were many pillars constructed from white stone, and it had thusly become a rather famous sightseeing spot.

Godou had been thrown onto one of the pillars.

.... The impact had been massive. Though he did not have any prior experience, it probably felt like being hit by a truck.

"Since the olden times, wrestling was never a warrior-only technique, it was also a sport for the masses. Perhaps you might have already known this as well. Come, let us test our skills!"

"No way I'll do it! I'm an exemplar modern person, I didn't have that kind of upbringing!"

Godou retorted instinctively. Perseus should have been referring to mixed martial arts, but there was no way Godou had those kinds of martial arts skills.

While standing up, Godou felt a chilling sensation.

His body was unable to exert its full flexibility, due to the impact to his back region. His body was hurting all over, and Perseus slowly approached.

He had no choice but to fight, and Godou caught sight of a beautiful girl in his field of vision.

While feeling confused about the fight between god and Campione, the masses were watching in a trance-like state. They did not number over a thousand, but it was at least a few hundred.

And standing at the front of the audience was a beautiful silver-haired girl, an expression of anxiety, as though she wanted to call out her magic sword and stand between Godou and the hero.

Godou hurriedly tried to tell her 'it's still too early' through his expression, looking straight at Liliana.

When doing battle with a divinity that possessed many strange and powerful authorities, it would be best not to show your entire hand at once, or the possibility of a complete wipeout would be high.

A more practical way would be to judge the flow of combat, then gradually increasing your combat strength, that would be more efficient.

It was like switching players out in the middle of a soccer or baseball match, Liliana felt rather regretful, and she loosened her tense shoulders, it seems that she had realized his intentions.

"... For I am strongest amongst the strong. Truly, I am one that holds each and every victory. I care not whom challenges me, whether man or devil; I may face all my foes and all my enemies. Regardless, I shall crush all those who wouldst stand in my way!"

Godou recited the words of power.

The sacred hymn of Verethragna that declared of being the strongest and of victory. Visualizing that image. That of the heroic and indomitable, horned divine beast - the incarnation of the [Bull] .

"O' mighty bull that possesseth the horns of shining gold, grant me your aid!"

As one with Godou's determination, the pain in his body gradually left him.

At times like this, the adrenaline that rushes through the Campione's body, is roughly a hundred times higher than that of a normal person. Because of how haphazard their bodies are, in battle, even if their bones break, inner organs get pierced, they can endure the pain.

"Oo, using a new power? With the divine power of transformation that you obtained from that war god, what kind of power will it be this time!?"

Perseus grabbed hold of him again, while shouting.

Does he intend on throwing me again? However, my strength won't lose out to his this time.

The activation condition for the [Bull] was for the opponent to possess superhuman strength. If the foe was Perseus, then there would be no problem - !

Godou grabbed onto Perseus body while bending back, and flung him backwards splendidly.

This time was the beautiful hero's turn to be sent flying through the air and smashing into the stone pillar.

"Hahaha, you do understand after all! Magnificent, come, give me another attack!"

Perseus stood up, laughing in a loud voice.

The look in his eyes started to get more serious, perhaps the attack had done no damage.

Godou went 'hmph' with his nose.

Though he was slightly disappointed, but Godou did not plan on fighting with the hero of the myths for too long. Because he had a more efficient and realistic battle plan, Godou held back his thoughts of shame and touched the stone pillar.

.... The him of now possessed a superhuman strength.

A strength that was not generated by muscle, but a strange, supernatural power.

When using the incarnation of the [Bull], he only needed to place his feet on the land, and a burning hot power would flow from his feet to the rest of his body, that should be the source of this strange power.

Godou used both his arms to hug the white stone pillar of San Francesco di Paola church.

The pillars crafted of beautiful stone in the front of the church were about four, five meters tall, of pure limestone. Of course, they were firmly fixed into the ground, and onto the church above.

"O, OOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!"

In sync with his roar, his mind focused.

The power of the [Bull] had one absurd characteristic, that is when the target of this authority is heavier, the strength also increases in proportion.

In a direct comparison of strength with Perseus, he could probably be thrown away for a distance of roughly over ten meters , but right here in front of the church, with his full strength -

... Creak... Crack... Unpleasant sounds could be heard from the pillar.

Cracks began to appear at the top of the pillar, and Godou felt that it was almost ready. In one breath, he plucked out the pillar - no, more accurately, he broke it off.

It was such an unbelievable sight, even though that he was the one who did it, Godou still felt dumbfounded by it.

Like Popeye, the one who gained superhuman strength after eating spinach, or Judge Samson from the Old Testament who pulled down the pillars of the Temple of Dagon, that kind of feat.

(By the way, this church was designed in the early nineteenth century by the famous architect Pietro Bianchi, which the Pope recognized as a building of historical significance. The act of damaging this building would probably incur divine wrath.)

Without thinking, Godou swung that pillar back and forth -

With a heavy impact, he struck Perseus.

No, to use the verb [struck] would be a gross understatement, it was like using those industrial cranes with the gigantic steel ball used for demolition to attack Perseus.

"Ngh! What terrific strength!"

Perseus used both his hands to protect his face, and Godou forcefully pummeled him flat out on the ground.

The stone pillar being used as a weapon of brutality was made of limestone, hence it broke into pieces after a short while. Shaking off the dust on his body, the hero then glared at Godou with a sharp gaze.

It was neither hateful nor angered, but rather a look of determination and appreciation of the aggression shown.

"You too are a man known as a King, and I feel that you should use a more fitting weapon - But this is fine too, although I still wish for your actions to be more beautiful!"

While still speaking, he spread out his arms, and Perseus kicked off the ground.

A tackle with a lowered body. It might have been a technique from wrestling or pankration[29]. However, they were not competing in their fighting skills, but rather this was a free style, no holds barred deathmatch.

- Therefore, Godou threw the remains of the stone pillar.

Taking only weight into account, the weight of the pillar in this situation must have been at least a hundred kilograms.

He threw, with the supernatural power of the [Bull], and with Kusanagi Godou's past experience as a skilled baseball catcher, he had confidence in his throwing power and control.

Puuun!!

What was formerly a stone pillar gave off a terrific noise from the air turbulence as it moved through the air.

Perseus jumped aside, dodging the stone pillar, and on where he had stood moments ago, near the stone steps, the remains of the stone pillar missed its target, smashing onto the ground and then rolling aside.

"I'm sorry, but using improper methods to obtain victory is my favorite thing to do. I don't intend on listening to your request, like having another magnificent and grand duel."

"Is that so... Fine, then you may use your own preferred methods to display your strength."

Perseus' favorite sword appeared in thin air, and his hand firmly grasped it.

"It's not fair if only you use a weapon, so let us do battle, with this sword in my hand."

The words this time marked the start of a magnificent fight.

Godou broke off yet another pillar from the San Francesco di Paola church.

With that he swung, he threw, he struck, and he threw down.

His foe, Perseus was moving like a white panther on flatlands, running, jumping, dodging. And then, with his body that was as solid as steel, he ventured to withstand a blow from the stone pillar, causing it to shatter into pieces.

Whether it was the offensive or defensive side, this was a battle between extraordinary supermen.

.... On a related note, the audience, upon seeing the tragedy of destruction unfold, finally regained their senses, screaming, shouting, sighing, breaking out into chaos. The crowds began shouting and yelling, scurrying away into the surroundings, and the situation had become a state of panic.

I hope no one gets hurt -

However even as Godou looked onto their panicked states, he grew worried.

No one was foolish enough to stumble into this plaza that was a battlefield between supermen, but in their jostling and shoving in that chaos, might cause someone to be injured, and that caused him to worry.

Before the start of the fight, Godou was constantly troubled over that. By now, he had already fought with all his might for roughly ten minutes -

Piazza Plebiscito had been reduced to a vacant land, like ruins.

On the stone pavement of the plaza, pieces of limestone had been scattered all over, in the form of small pebbles or rubble.

The church, with the white pillars like a cloistered corridor now destroyed, any trace of resemblance to its original self had vanished along with them.

Most of the pillars having been removed by Godou, and thus, the exemplary historic building that used to be the Roman church, became a scene of devastation.

It had been such a huge sacrifice, and yet Perseus remained relatively unhurt.

"Hahaha, well fought. However, it's about time to end this!"

Tightly gripping his sword, the hero shouted.

With the nimbleness of a white panther, with speed that made him seem like a meteor, Godou could not even see his figure.

His foe was fast, and there was also a massive gap between their melee combat capabilities.

Although Godou could still hold on with the range of his weapon and his own reflexes, the odds were heavily against him. The pillars were almost fully smashed up, and with that his sources of weapons ran low.

.... Godou remembered about Liliana.

Should he call her here, and leave the defense to her? After considering that, Godou immediately shook his head.

Against someone who had that level of speed, even if the two of them attacked at once, it would not make much of a difference.

Before the battle, he had heard from her that her trump card - was on par with Erica's [Spell Words of Golgotha], and he wanted to make use of it at a better time.

- He would have to rely on his own power to get out of this situation, and grit his teeth, withstanding the blows he was going to take.

Godou steadied his resolve.

His lips twisting to the side, he revealed a grim smile, and threw aside the stone pillar in his hands.

"All of the enemies before me, fear me."

From his mouth escaped words of power.

Perseus sped towards him, thrusting his sword out in a direct piercing attack.

Unleashing a thrust of certain kill, it seems - just the right timing.

Godou took the attack head on without dodging. One of the reasons for that was that the attack had been simply too fast to evade.

"Every sinner shall tremble before my power. Now is the time, that I obtain the toughness of ten mountains, the strength of a hundred rivers, and the power of a thousand camels! Upon my mighty self, I shall bear the symbol of the raging camel!"

While chanting the words of power, he was penetrated by the sword.

His chest was pierced into by the thick, heavy blade.

Perseus wanted to run him through completely, devastate his body, and rip him open from the back - !

"What?"

Perseus murmured, with uncertainty.

As expected of the serpent-slaying hero, his senses were impressive, as he had noticed the unusual circumstances that had happened to his opponent.

Even with the sword pierced into his body, Godou raised his left leg, and kicked out sharply. He had, with his unsteady body, kicked forward directly at Perseus' chest, sending him flying.

Godou was an amateur at martial arts. However, this kick was at a level that surpassed those of every human martial artist.

An awesome kick, as though he were swinging a steel hammer.

If it had hit a concrete floor, most likely the floor would be smashed into pieces.

" - Guh!?"

It was the first time he had heard Perseus let out a pained gasp.

His sturdy, strong body was kicked away, sending him flying back over twenty meters.

At the same time, the sword that was embedded in Godou's chest was pulled out, flying back with the hero.

" - Gah!"

This time it was Godou who let out the gasp of pain. The blade was removed from his body suddenly, and fresh blood began to flow out from the wound.

It hurts, ithurtsithurtsithurtsithurts, itsoutrageouslypainful!

The pain from the stab wound began to fade slowly, and though it was still very painful, it was a degree that was more tolerable, and the blood had clotted.

This was the ability of the [Camel] incarnation, retarding the sensation of pain, and gaining an abnormal endurance.

On top of that, the strength and power of his legs skyrocketed. If he were to challenge a Muay Thai master at a battle of kicks now , he was confident he would easily win. Furthermore, the destructive power was -

... In Godou's field of vision, he saw a white meteor accelerating towards him.

With such terrifying speed, perhaps it was moving more rapidly than a straight fastball from a Major League ace pitcher.

However, before he even realized it, Godou's right leg had already entered a defensive motion.

An excellent high kick. It was impressive that Perseus had somehow managed to defend against it, but his defense was smashed right through by the kick.

... The body of the hero soared through the air once again.

The distance travelled in flight was roughly fifty meters this time, and Perseus flew from the devastated building of San Francesco di Paola church all the way to the opposite side, the wall of the royal palace of Naples.

"Guah!?"

The walls of the royal palace had been constructed with dull orange bricks.

A gigantic hole like that of a volcano crater was created, and with a heavy thump, the body of Perseus fell onto the stone floor of Piazza Plebiscito.

Part 3

.... Even he himself thought that the destructive power was absurdly shocking. Although he wanted to follow up the attack, Godou lowered his knee.

The pain from the stab wound was still hard to bear, and Godou winced in pain.

However, the pain was an exchange for the power of the [Camel], it could not be helped.

The condition for using this form was to have taken a certain degree of damage. One or two punches would not be enough to activate it. It must be something at least to the extent of being stabbed by a sword.

At any rate, he was already thanking the heavens for the fact that he survived.

Godou felt relieved from the bottom of his heart. The power of reincarnation of the [Ram] was meaningless if he suffered an instant death.

"Kusanagi Godou!"

The cool voice of the girl's voice could be heard, and Liliana ran to Godou's side.

"A, are you alright!? You had suddenly stood still frozen, and then purposely took his blade, what were you thinking!"

"S, sorry that I made you worry... Liliana, watch out!"

Noticing the status of Perseus who he had kicked away, Godou let out a warning.

He had picked himself off the stone floor, as though unhurt.

"Hahahahahaha! I had originally wanted to just kill some time before my battle with Athena, but Kusanagi Godou, you've granted me some happiness! Fufu, the brave girl has come back? Very well, allow me to end this godslayer, and rescue the maiden!"

Perseus proclaimed, trying to boast of his honor.

"God Perseus, I'm very sorry, but please do not make such terrible jokes. I am the knight of Kusanagi Godou, there's no need to rescue me - !"

"Ho, you're brave indeed, I like that personality!"

Seeing the summoned magic sword Il Maestro, Liliana who was donned in a black and blue battle dress, the hero smiled in return.

"However, for a maiden held by a demonic entity to submit to me, it would be the same as the lovely Andromeda. To say nothing of your being a miko - a virgin maiden serving the great goddesses of the land. All the better for me."

The words that Perseus spoke held powerful magical energy.

Words of power, and it seemed like he had heard this before - feeling strange, Godou immediately realized.

Verethragna, the rebellious war god, had once bound Godou and Erica, using the exact same magic art on the island of Sardinia.

"The hands of a graceful maiden are ill-suited for holding a blade, it would be good to throw that kind of thing aside and await my victory."

"Don't listen to him, Liliana. That is a strange power that compels others to do his bidding, even if you resist it with all your will, you will not be able to resist!"

Godou warned her immediately.

Having fought with gods on numerous occasions, Godou someway or the other understood how to counter it, even if he were a normal human he would be able to resist the spell, it should not pose a problem -

However, Liliana only stood there motionless, blankly looking at Perseus.

"It's futile, Kusanagi Godou. It's a little different from what you think. If one has the will to resist a god to the end, then it is possible to remove our spell, but in actual fact it's hard. That girl, she is a mage, hence from young, she had been aware of the existences of gods, and inculcated in them the superiority of the divinities. For someone to lose the many years of brainwashing, it would require a long time at the very least."

Perseus nonchalantly explained.

The smile, aggression and inability to define good and bad was a little different from his initial impression of the hero. Now, he had started to talk about the truths of the world, the true face of a god.

"Furthermore she is also a miko. If you understand my origins, then you should know the role that they play, with regards to me? After I slay the serpent, they become my bride, something akin to spoils of war, that is their origin. Are you not aware of this?"

Godou found the answer from the knowledge given by Liliana.

The tradition that dragon-and-snake-slaying heroes become husband and wife with the maidens they rescue originated from [The Myth of Perseus and Andromeda].

"The goddesses of the land, after doing battle with the hero and being struck down, were passed down in history and myths as dragons or serpents, this was for the purpose of praising the deeds of the heroes, glorifying their valor."

"Mm. That's right."

"Then, to act as proof, the defeated goddesses were forced to submit, which is to say the heroes took the fallen goddesses as their brides, this way it became a [defeated the monster and even saved the maiden] story, a happy ending. Your wife - Andromeda is in fact the great goddess of the land Tiamat, possessing the same divinity as the giant serpent which took her away!"

Godou looked straight at the handsome hero, the look in his eyes sharp and focused.

It was frustrating that he did not use this as part of the [Sword]. The hero who rescued the maiden. Behind their tales, such truths were hidden, Godou found this infuriating and unbearable.

"Indeed, you know of this. The points you had stated were accurate, hence you should understand, the reason why that girl cannot disobey me. As a hero of steel, the great goddesses of the land are targets of conquest, the same goes for the miko. For them to go against my will, it is too difficult a feat."

He said it as though the witches were his own belongings.

By Perseus who was acting as if this was common sense, Godou was annoyed.

"Whether it's futile or not, we'll only know after we try it."

".... Mm. To disregard a pact between human and god, and even fight back? Fufufu, what a likeable guy you are. If I didn't know I was a god, I might have said the exact same words as you."

Perseus revealed a slightly sorrowful smile.

An unlikely expression from the beautiful and ferocious hero, seemingly lamenting over the flaws of the world.

"Regrettable it may be, but I am a hero that became a god. I understand your mistake. The miko who will obey, one could say that it is destiny, thus it's best if you gave up."

"Who's going to give up!"

This guy was the same as Verethragna. Godou was very certain.

Though he was a hero, he could not become a hero. If he were a true hero, he would realize the mistake in his words!

".... Liliana, it's as you heard. Is it really fine to blindly follow the gods? I'm not willing, and I will never accept you being manipulated by that kind of guy."

"It's useless. Young maiden, throw aside your weapon and come to my side. This is something you must do."

Hearing the words from both her king and the god -

Unnoticed, Liliana had closed her eyes, and seconds later, she reopened her eyes and then her mouth.

"Hear the sorrow of David, people! Alas, may the heroes fall! Alas, may the weapons of war be destroyed!"

The singing voice resounded through the plaza.

"O' mountains of Gilboa, I pray that dew and rain will not fall upon your peaks! I pray that your lands grow infertile, unable to flourish! There, the shield of the hero was cast away! The shield of Saul, unpolished with oil, was cast away over yonder!"

The surrounding air slowly began to grow chilly.

This bone-chilling cold was extremely similar to the [Spell Words of Golgotha] that Erica used.

For Erica's, the atmosphere was heavy with despair and hatred, that kind of sensation. As for Liliana's, it was the anguish of the terrible melancholy of regretful departed spirits, an exclamation of warriors who tired of battle.

This description was fitting for the situation, an unbearable feeling that made one want to flee.

"... You actually broke out of my control?"

Perseus was shocked.

The usually grand, magnificent and handsome hero, was confused for the first time.

"Undrinking blood of murderers, the unretreating bow of Jonathan! Unconsuming oil of the brave soul, returning the sword of Saul in vain! Alas, the heroes, fallen in the midst of battle!"

In Liliana's left hand, blue light began to gather, and a longbow as long as she was tall was formed.

In her right hand that was also glowing with blue light, appeared four arrows.

"O' bow of Jonathan, with eagle's swiftness and lion's strength, a hero's weapon. Go forth in assault, upon my fleeing enemies!"

From the longbow that was a shade of rare blue, the four arrows were released, seemingly like comets.

The arrows flew in an unnatural arc, aiming directly at Perseus.

The targeted Perseus displayed his superb speed, a brilliant white meteor that jumped aside at blinding speeds, dodging all the blue arrows.

However, one of the four arrows pierced into his left shoulder.

"Ku - !"

A visible look of pain could be seen on Perseus' face.

His left shoulder that was hit by the blue arrow suffered major damage, his clothes dyed red by his flowing blood, and his left arm rendered useless.

This was Liliana's trump card, [Spell Words of David], Godou could not help but be in awe.

The summoned bow of Jonathan that could pierce a god, the secret art of the sword of Saul that could slay a god, it was indeed impressive. Perseus had suffered from it.

"Are you okay, Liliana!?"

"Of course, weren't you the one who taught me how to break out of it?"

"No, although that is... aren't witches unable to turn upon the heroes - "

"Not 'unable', but rather 'difficult to'. However, carved upon my heart, are feelings of burning flames. Even when facing a god, I cannot allow these feelings to be trod over... When I thought of that, the spell was instantly broken!"

"Fe, feelings of burning flames?"

"Yes. My bonds with you... Yes, we are like a pair of birds flying wing to wing, branches of the same tree entwined together, no matter in life or in death, our hearts will be as one. Naturally, I felt that I could not let you fight alone."

Liliana's face had turned a deep red, revealing an extremely cute expression.

The power of friendship, or something like that? A little unsatisfied, Godou nodded his head, and then looked towards the Perseus who looked euphoric for some reason, while raising his sword.

"Then, shall we clean him up, the two of us? That skill earlier, can you still use it?"

"Yes, one way or another. One more time is the limit."

"Got it. Then, use that last time and pin that hero-sama on the ground."

".... But, if I simply shoot him, he'll just dodge it just like last time."

"I'll go hold him down! Take the chance to attack then!"

If it were Erica, they should be able to convey their intentions to each other, heart to heart.

With Liliana, they were not a combination of that level yet.

However, this will be resolved, with time. For sure, he'll be able to achieve an extraordinary level of rapport with this girl, and Godou who truly believed that, dashed towards Perseus.

"What have you done to that Miko, Kusanagi Godou!"

"I didn't do anything! It's just that the bonds between us have triumphed over your abnormal powers!"

"Is that so! Hahaha! As I thought, since ancient times, the power of love has always been the strongest weapon! I, Perseus, had actually forgotten that truth! I must be getting too old!"

For some reason he was laughing really joyfully. The hero brandished his sword with only his right hand, his left arm, due to the damage from being pierced by the bow of Jonathan, was unable to move.

Godou and Perseus both gritted their teeth, each confronting the other.

The area around the stab wound was unbearably painful, but he only had to endure for a while longer -

A slash. The sword was swung towards him.

Godou wanted to jump aside to dodge, but the movements of the wounded body had become sluggish.

His posture had already fallen apart, at this rate, he'll be directly hit. Since he was moving forward, left or right were not an option, Godou could only dodge by falling towards his back.

Godou laid down flat on the floor, facing Perseus who was in an assault stance.

He maintained the posture on the floor, and kicked out forward , like a move from the Brazilian martial art Capoeira, an attack from a lower position.

The target was Perseus' arm that was holding the sword.

If he could break that area - the hero noticed his intentions, and raised his arm high accordingly, and Godou's leg hit only air.

What followed was a downward slash. Godou quickly rolled aside to evade it.

The blade embedded itself deeply into the ground - it was time.

"O' bow of Jonathan, with eagle's swiftness and lion's strength, a hero's weapon. Go forth in assault, upon my fleeing enemies!"

The chance had come. While he was thinking, Liliana's words of power filled the air. *As expected of my new partner, you've properly answered my expectations!*

The awaited four comets came from upwards.

Perseus, whose gaze was on the stone floor, had reflexively tried to pull out his sword.

"Ooh, is it coming - !"

As expected, a white meteor! He managed to dodge three of the comet-like arrows.

The last remaining one pierced his left leg completely, embedding itself deep into the stone floor, nailing him to the ground splendidly.

In order to regain his mobility, Perseus who wanted to pluck out the arrow, stretched out his right hand.

Taking advantage of this opening, Godou ran away from Perseus.

"Thus speaketh Lord Mithra. The sinful shall be met with justice ."

If he used this method, he should be able to defeat Perseus once and for all.

- That's why, get here faster. This time round, surely, I'll let you go on a rampage as much as you like. Anyway, just come out faster!

Chanting out the words of power, Godou ran with all his strength. Because the [Camel] form was being removed, his body no longer had a superhuman endurance, and the pain from the stab wound grew, becoming more intense by the moment.

Even so, he moved his legs through sheer willpower, and recited the last words of power.

"May spines be crushed, may bones be broken, tendons torn; hair, brains, and blood mingled and trampled together with the earth! The one unblunted and unapproachable! Oath-breaking sinners be purged by the iron hammer of justice!"

A distortion appeared in the air, the doorway between reality and the 'imaginary' world.

This time, it appeared above the stone floor - not on it.

In the plaza where Godou had lain down, and had been diced up by Perseus' sword - in the air above, twenty meters long roughly, estimated from the ground.

From the doorway appeared the pitch-black visage of the [Boar] .

Savagely glaring downwards, it was restless. Yes, the target this time was Piazza Plebiscito - the place where Perseus was pinned down on.

RUOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!

The divine beast's roars boomed forth, resounding throughout the whole of Naples.

That massive black body, descending from the air - though the elevation was rather low, it was still considered as 'descending from the air'.

"Mu - Ooh!!"

While looking upwards at the massive body of the [Boar] in astonishment, Perseus yelled out.

Immediately after, the massive pitch-black body rapidly fell onto the ground, trampling and rampaging on the hero's body, along with the stone floor of the Piazza Plebiscito.

Part 4

As the pitch-black [Boar] used its powerful body and rampaged through the plaza and on the [Heretic God], Godou also fell on the ground.

It seems that he had finally reached his limit, and he lost consciousness.

Liliana who had hurriedly rushed over to him, almost burst into tears upon seeing his condition.

The abdomen area that was wounded by Perseus was stained deep red, and the amount of bleeding was severe. Even if it were the body of a devil king Campione, it would definitely not hold out for long.

"A-Ah, why did it turn out like this, please get a hold of yourself, Kusanagi Godou! My lord!"

Liliana who had instantly fallen into a state of panic, calmed down just as fast.

At any rate, she had to get him to the hospital. The body of a Campione had a tremendous vitality, but she still had to get medical treatment for him as soon as possible.

Liliana closed in on the [King]'s body, checking for palpitations.

At that moment, she remembered the magic art of healing, [Recovery].

Thinking that, she thought that she should use that magic first. Because of the fixed idea that Campione's bodies are resistant to magic, she did not think of using it at first, but now, she knew how to bypass that.

"T, this is for the sake of treatment, hence I'm ki-kissing you, there won't be any problems... no, or rather, this should be my duty...."

Embarrassedly murmuring to herself, she looked at the [King]'s lips.

Her heart was beating furiously.

For the heavily injured person lying on the ground before her, she had to do her best to save him.

She wanted to cook for him, wanted to knit something and give it to him during winter, and also taking care of his daily life, cleaning his room and other things...

At any rate, he had to get better first, and then she would slowly nurse him back to health afterwards. Just as she made up her mind to kiss him....

"... Hm, some way or the other, he succeeded? Though still inexperienced, at least the ending has met the bare minimum standards."

Suddenly the voice of a girl could be heard, and Liliana turned around in a panic.

Standing there was a young girl with the majesty of a Queen.

She had silvery hair that shimmered even in the night, and pupils as black as darkness.

- Heretic Athena.

"I had personally made a special trip to inform him not to let down his guard after victory, only to find him in such a state. Such an inexperienced brat... But well, to have fought that troublemaking god this far is already pretty good. After all, that guy is a hero that had defeated me - "

Though her tone was strict, Liliana still sensed that the goddess that looked at the [King] with a little praise in her gaze.

"However, as a warrior that is also King, one must also prepare for moments of weakness like this. I have told him this before, but apparently he has not fixed this problem at all. Tsk, what an unexpected fellow."

Athena approached Kusanagi Godou, and then bent over in front of him.

Realizing the goddess' intentions, Liliana cried out, 'Pl, please wait!' attempting to stop her...

It was too late.

Athena had already kissed Kusanagi Godou, using those small lips of hers.

"Take this as a compensation for involving you in that battle, and also as a prize that you won. Your wounds have healed... but next time, do fight better!"

Haughtily proclaiming that, Athena stood up.

After that, she threw Liliana who was standing at the side a glance, and ordered with the majesty of a Queen,

"Girl, take good care of your master. After some rest, his body should fully recover. Also, remind him not to forget that promise - someday, Athena will appear once more, before your eyes!"

With those words, Athena disappeared from the streets at night.

(Though one might call it a 'street', but Piazza Plebiscito and the surrounding area had been destroyed thoroughly, it would be an understatement to even call it 'ruins'.)

The remaining witch who was also a Great Knight, because of that missed good opportunity, was kneeling on the ground in disappointment, her shoulders drooped unhappily.

The pitch-black divine beast in the distance offered a roar of victory to the heavens.

In an alley of Naples from where the roar of the divine beast could be slightly heard, particles of light shone, gathered, forming into the shape of a human.

The light became the handsome man, the hero - Heretic Perseus.

"Seriously, by such a savage and unbeautiful method, I was done in by such a method of this degree. Not even in the myths has such a thing occurred!"

Panting heavily, Perseus was trembling with excitement.

Before he was almost smashed by the divine beast, he became light, and succeeded in rebirthing. The sun that set in the west would rise again in the morning, this was the grace of light's life-force.

Because he had used up all the remaining divine power of the [Sun], he could no longer use this method to escape from a crisis. However...

Perseus looked in the direction of Kusanagi Godou while smiling.

"If I return right away, perhaps I might be able to continue our duel... would it be a good time? Fufu, to sheath my blade like this, indeed it would be a waste."

Although he was a divinity, taking that kind of intense attack was still very exhausting.

To be honest, he had already reached his limits, though that may be the case, he still wanted to continue battling. To be in the physical world that he had not been in for a while, to have finally fought a worthy opponent, his spirits were roused.

"Eeh - I think that it's about time. If it's pro wrestling, it'll take three counts, if it's boxing, then ten counts, for the match to end."

The male voice of someone approaching slowly reached his ears .

Not a human nor a god. A godslayer. Feeling that presence, Perseus immediately summoned his sword.

The footsteps did not cease. It was a youth of a godslayer.

Perseus sensed from the way he had moved that he was a highly skilled martial artist. The longsword of steel that he had gripped in his hand, was obviously a normal longsword, but it felt indescribably threatening in his hands.

The secret behind that most likely laid in that arm glowing with silver light.

He did not know what kind of authority it was, but that arm was the usurped authority.

"Yo, nice to meet you. My name is Salvatore Doni. My relationship with that guy... what was it... lifelong friends, as well as rivals, and you should be Perseus?"

"I don't mind if you call me that. Correct me if I'm wrong, but are you going to fight in order to protect your friend?"

"Hm~m, that doesn't sound quite right."

The blond godslayer smiled happily.

"This time, it seems I've gone a little overboard in my games. If I don't put in some effort on my side, I might get severely rapped on by Andrea."

"Ho. Then, you intend on doing battle with me?"

"That's right, but I don't really like fighting with the wounded. Even if you flee, I will not give chase. I'll make this clear, if you cross blades with me right now, ten out of ten times, it will be a crushing defeat for you."

Salvatore Doni smiled like a 'good guy' while saying that.

A carefree smile of a youth, but in his eyes burned a dark flame.

Doni was a person of rare abilities, his talent was simply shocking.

Faintly smiling, Perseus saw through his true skill. If he were a human, he would not be that different from any other person, but if this kind of person was a godslayer -

For sure, this youth was a one-in-a-billion heroic figure.

The godslayers of this generation sure are interesting. Superb.

"I understand what you're saying. But if I say that I want to fight, what will you do?"

"Of course, I'll show no mercy."

Two swordsmen with identical views, raised their weapons, facing off.

Salvatore Doni relaxed his body, loosely holding his weapon. A neutral stance, with unparalleled versatility, able to shift to any posture to unleash any kind of sword art. The result of the uncountable amount of hours he had put into training.

Before the fight had begun, Perseus had already seen through his foe's trick.

It was not known whether he was history's strongest swordsman, but of his generation, he was definitely the strongest.

Conversely, Perseus' sword skills was very simple.

Moving at speeds that exceeded the enemy's, slashing at faster speeds, that was it. To the superhuman hero, that was enough.

At this moment, he became a brilliant white meteor and closed in on Doni, and brought his sword down.

"That's why I said I hate fighting with the wounded. It's another matter if you were at your best, but in your weakened state, you're slow enough for me to yawn and then catch your blow."

Doni swung his sword upwards directly from below.

In the next instant, Perseus' sword was cleaved into two, and Doni's blade without hesitation, hacked into the hero.

This sword was forged of the highest-grade steel, capable of slaying a god -

Satisfied with this defeat, Perseus was all smiles, as his body slowly dissipated, like dust.

"... As I thought, I didn't gain an authority? Even though I had undergone great troubles to take down a kami-sama, this is such a waste."

Looking on at the ending of Perseus' body slowly fading into dust, Doni murmured.

Although it was not necessary to defeat a god fair and square in a one-to-one fight, to become a Campione, one had to defeat a god in a suitable manner.

In other words, one had to satisfy the mother of Campiones, Pandora, obtaining a victory enough for her to welcome one of her children, and with how Doni had achieved it, most likely would result in her puffing her cheeks and saying 'no, this won't do'.

"I somehow recall being told this before, if we bring down a god who is in a severely weakened state, our authorities will not increase... Hm? Since when have I met her? Oh well, it's not important anyway."

It seems as though he had remembered meeting Pandora somewhere before, but he could not bring to mind the exact details .

Salvatore Doni was not bothered, since he could not remember it, it probably was not anything important to begin with.

And afterwards, as he did not wish to meet with Kusanagi Godou, he departed from Naples.

Before his long-winded butler that took care of him caught up, he had to conceal his trail, and that concludes the scene that no one else had seen, that occurred behind the descent of the [Heretic God] in Naples.

Epilogue

The night in Naples had not quite ended yet, and after the [Boar], the one who played the leading role in crushing Perseus had disappeared, the unconscious Kusanagi Godou had been sent to the hospital.

When Godou awoke, he had a great shock finding himself lying in the hospital bed.

His bandaged abdomen that had been pierced by the sword, inexplicably did not hurt a single bit, most likely because the wound had already been healed. After asking, he then found out that it was a little present left behind by Athena.

Hence, Godou asked Liliana to arrange for his discharge. However -

"The stab wound was very deep! Even if Athena had healed you , you should be obediently resting! Please have a good sleep!"

Liliana got very angry, and forced Godou to continue lying down.

His injuries were minor, but he was trapped in the hospital. Godou who was lying on the bed grew restless, looking around all the corners of the ward. Because it was a single room, he was alone with Liliana.

- Come to think of it, what happened with Perseus?

Godou suddenly thought of that problem.

Since his authorities were not transferred over, then he must have definitely survived the [Boar]'s attack. As expected of a god, his will to live was tremendous.

As he did not appear, this meant that he was probably recuperating somewhere.

Godou set aside his care for that matter, and looked at Liliana who was sitting next to him.

She was carefully using a small knife to peel a pear, if it were Erica, she would definitely get her maid Arianna to do it.

"Could it be that you can even do normal housework?"

"That is only natural. Though I know who you're comparing me with, but please don't compare me with that vixen. Putting aside the fact that we're knights, as a woman, knowing how to do these things is normal. I'm also rather skilled at cooking, and better than the average person at housework, too."

Liliana replied, to Godou's rude question.

With a pained smile, Godou nodded. Because he saw that she had a maid, he had lumped her together with Erica.

"I, if it's fine with you, one of these days, I'll personally cook for you, how about it?"

"Wow. I'll be looking forward to that. When that time comes, I'll be in your care."

"In that case, then allow me to conveniently cl, clean your room, and wash your clothes as well. Since it's just 'conveniently', please leave it all to me."

"Eh? No need for that, actually it's fine if you don't go to those lengths..."

"No, this is also the duty of a knight! Because you are a [King], you do not need to mind such trivial things!"

"I, isn't that wrong!?"

Just when their conversation was developing in a strange direction...

With a clang, the door opened, and two girls entered the room.

Erica Blandelli and Mariya Yuri, his companions that he had parted with for a day and whom he had come from Japan with.

"Ah, what's this, you purposely came all the way here for me? It would have been fine even if you had waited for me back on Sardinia."

Without thinking, Godou greeted them immediately.

Instantly, his insides froze over. First, Yuri's clear and dignified eyes had raised up, and glared straight at him, while Erica had revealed a gentle smile.

"Godou-san, you've let others worry for you this much, and yet you don't show any signs of repentance. Not having any news of you, worrying over your safety, do you know how much worry and anxiety you've caused us? - Please do a little soul-searching."

Yuri had suddenly started preaching.

Godou, being pierced by her eyes of the Yasha, felt a sense of terror.

"To make matters worse, it had really turned out like this, exactly as what Erica had foreseen..."

"I, I'm really sorry, Mariya. I tried to get in contact, but I couldn't get through. B, by the way, what do you mean by 'like this '?"

Apologizing in a panic, Godou tried to change the topic.

Yuri's eyes then became like a blizzard in the frozen mountains, looking towards Godou who was lying on the bed and Liliana, *what exactly was she worried about?*

Then, it was Erica, who had been smiling that gentle, beautiful smile ever since she walked in.

A graceful, yet terrifying smile, like a devil.

- Danger, this was a super huge danger, his instincts as a Campione told him.

"Yuri, don't be too hard on him. He is a King after all, you have to forgive his slightly mischievous actions. In the end, he got through healthily, and even defeated the [Heretic God]."

Spoken like an understanding, sensible lady.

But he could not let himself be deceived, this was a façade, made to conceal the true attack.

"About Godou's brave, heroic deeds, we've heard everything from that witch named Diana. It's really impressive how you managed to discover the god's true identity without us, even using the incarnation of the [Warrior] to that extent."

Tense with nervousness, Godou listened to Erica's piercing compliments.

When? When did she begin her assault? This ward should only be on the second level, if necessary, he only simply needed to break the window and jump down, he would not die anyway.

"I have to thank Lily too, seems you've taken good care of Godou..."

An elegant smile, towards her silver-haired childhood friend.

The moment had finally arrived - a flash of steel. A shortsword had appeared in Erica's right hand, and she stabbed towards Godou in an all-too-natural action.

"W, whoaaaaaa!"

He had already sensed that Erica would do something, but he did not quite expect it to be this serious.

Godou shouted, hastily escaping from the bed.

The trajectory of the shortsword was evidently straight towards his chest - was his heart the target!?

"Have you gone mad, Erica! Isn't that too disrespectful, towards our lord!"

Liliana shouted out loud, blocking Erica's shortsword with her small knife.

Gakin!

Gan, gan, gan, gan,[30] went the sharp clashing sound of metal, both sides using ingenious sword techniques, exchanging intense blows with the small knife and shortsword.

And then, Erica finally lowered her shortsword.

"As I thought, you're sticking up for Godou, Lily. You don't have any intention of hiding anything?"

"Erica, I do not have anything to hide. If you understand, then refrain from such violence in the future. No matter how many times you go mad, I will defend him."

The two female knights looked at each other with sharp gazes, exchanging words.

"E, Erica, your joke's gone a little too far, spare me..."

Though he had shrunk back in fear by that piercing gaze, Godou still said it.

"If I don't scare you a little, it won't be considered as a punishment, don't you agree? In any case, Lily is covering up for you, something like this will definitely not do."

"Pu, punishment!?"

Erica looked at the shocked Godou with a pure smile.

As cute as a little girl, a smile like the sunflowers blooming during the summer, somehow he had seen it somewhere before.

"I've told you this before, I'm very generous, yet I am also a girl who will not control herself. If I have even the slightest bit of loathing for you, I will punish you. There's no problem, even if I had really stabbed you, you won't die anyway, and on the contrary , it'll even be beneficial to you."

"Don't be absurd! Why do I have to be treated this way!?"

"Ara, if I don't spell it out for you, you won't understand? ... You used the [Sword], right?"

- !? The shocked Godou sucked in his breath.

He had thought that if he didn't speak the truth, they would not find out. Godou had been counting on that, but it was simply too naive of him, he had underestimated her ability to gather information.

(The truth was that, Erica and the others, upon reaching Naples, were told by the witches duo who had welcomed them that: 'Ara Erica-san, I'm sorry to have made you come all the way here on purpose - don't worry, just leave supporting Kusanagi-sama to us, there's no problem!', 'The words of power to sever Perseus will be used to his heart's content. This is proof that, even if Erica-sama is not by his side, Kusanagi-sama will definitely not feel inconvenienced!' becoming their source of information. Of course, there was no way that Godou knew this.)

"The one who gave you the knowledge for the words of power was Lily, right?"

"That's correct. Because I'm the most suited person for doing that."

Erica used a humorless expression to look at the silver-haired Liliana who was very at ease.

Meeting with an enemy that had a massive growth in strength, which set off the warning bells - that kind of expression.

"The me who excels at the sword, who is proficient in magic, and also possessing spirit vision, my meeting with my lord, perhaps it might be destiny. If it's me, I will be able to assist my lord in any aspect."

"'My lord', did you say?"

"Yes. With this incident as a catalyst, I've decided to become Kusanagi Godou's personal knight, and I've even sworn an oath.

Erica, even though you are my senior, but I do not intend on particularly respecting you for it. Because, if you compare the both of us, I think that in every single way I'm the more capable and talented person."

Liliana proclaimed thus, and...

Erica started to smile with a 'fufu', and Godou began to break out in cold sweat.

Behind that cute smile was hidden a terrifying presence, Godou could feel it, he would have preferred her usual devil-like smile over this one.

"Really, such a hopeless person... Didn't I tell you that besides your legal wife, you could only have one lover? Furthermore, you didn't even get my permission before laying your hands on someone else. As I thought, I should give you a good stabbing, it's better if I teach you a lesson."

"Don't use such a cute expression while telling such jokes, it's seriously scary!"

"Seriously, when I tell a joke, I'll at least be classier about it. Right now, I'm simply stating the things that are floating through my mind."

"Calm down and listen to me! Liliana doesn't want to become my lover, she wants to become my knight!"

"Godou, those two phrases have the same meaning, you ought to learn some rhetoric and debating skills. These shallow excuses of yours for your infidelity, aren't interesting at all."

"What infidelity are you talking about! Mariya, don't just keep quiet, say something!"

It was impossible to win an argument with Erica.

It was a little late when he noticed, but Godou had turned his words to another girl. No matter how angry she was, the righteous and composed Yuri would help him...!

"That's true. Just as Erica-san has said, maybe if we let you get stabbed once, Godou-san might regret and repent for the sins he has committed. For the sake of doing battle with the [Heretic God], that kind of reason, stealing a maiden's lips is simply too vicious, that kind of action is just like that of a sexual offender, a path of evil."

No help was granted.

Like a princess that sentenced a criminal to death, Yuri's tone was icy-cold.

He never expected the miko-san to use Buddhist-like speech to reprimand him, but even so Godou decided to resist to the bitter end.

"B, but just think about it... Mariya and I... the time when we did that, isn't it the same as the situation that happened this time? Isn't it fine if you didn't describe it like that?"

"No. That time was a completely different situation."

"Eh? That's not it?"

"Definitely different. Anyway, your actions this time and our actions then are as different as the sky and the earth. The raving lies you are giving as excuses, are only to downplay the severity of your crimes."

Even Yuri had said that, Godou's mind became a mess.

He had escaped from the jaws of death during his battle with Perseus, why did he have to fall into a crisis even worse than that now? Why!?

"Seriously you all... really, such a severe lack of respect for our lord and King, but don't worry, Kusanagi Godou, I'm the only knight that will be eternally loyal to you, becoming your blade and shield, to stand by you no matter in life or death."

Only Liliana had made that kind of oath for him.

However, the more the extent to which she became his supporter, the greater and stronger the feeling oppression and pressure he sensed from Erica and Yuri.

- Godou had recognized the level of danger of the status quo, and realized the fact that he had become a player in this terribly delicate power game, and that he was lacking both time and experience.

Right now, he could only sit in front of the three girls, nervous and helpless.

The hot night in Naples would not be ending anytime soon.

Afterword

[After I finish writing this afterword, I'll go back to my hometown to get married.]

If I put up such a flag, maybe I'll be forgiven even if I don't write the afterword.

There are times when I think that.

It's been a while, if you're a first-time reader, then this would be our first meeting. I'm Takedzuki Jou. The main point I'm trying to make is, 'writing an afterword, it's slightly troublesome~, teehee', just that, but it had no effect on the Super Dash Editorial Department, so I have to obediently write this.

Well then, I've succeeded in completing four volumes of this work.

In this volume, a famous figure on the level of Athena from the first volume had arrived.

To the ladies that were mesmerized by the handsome hunks Sikorsky-san had drawn, please spread this message, 'draw even more beautiful characters' to him.

No, actually I'm very ignorant, I've never heard of any of the readers being female, but this is just in case, I'll pretend that there are.

That being said, if this turns out to be more popular than I thought, maybe I'll release a [Campione! Sengoku Basara Version] or something like that, I await the fiery letters that I will receive.

By the way, I'm still considering [Campione! Tonegawa Origins Version] and also [The Hakone Hotsprings filled with Bishoujos, porori also included Version], I hope to see the reader's responses for that!

Also, Volumes three and four have their stages set overseas, it's about time to return to Japan.

The prologue is almost done, and the next volume will get right into the thick of action. Though the plan is for it to be a [School Version], but plans are not set in stone, it'll be fine as long as I inform everyone before autumn.

If it's fine with you, please continue to look forward to the next volume. We shall meet again.

June of 2009, Takedzuki Jou.

Translator's Notes and References

1. ↑ **Perseus and Andromeda**: Perseus is the Greek Hero who killed Medusa; on his return trip, he saved Andromeda, a Princess of Aethiopia, who was chained to a rock as a sacrifice to pacify Cetus, a monster sent by Poseidon (Greek god of the ocean) to punish the locals for their Queen's insolent boasts. Perseus slew Cetus, then freed and married Andromeda.
2. ↑ **Yamata no Orochi**: literally meaning 'Eight-Branched Giant Snake', Orochi was an eight-headed and eight-tailed Japanese dragon slain by Susanoo, Japanese god of the sea and storms.
3. ↑ **Kushinada**: the eighth daughter of an elderly couple, whose previous seven daughters were all eaten by Orochi. After Susanoo offered to take her away to be saved, he then turned her into a comb to accompany him into 'battle' with Orochi (he actually got Orochi drunk and killed it).
4. ↑ **Divine Sword**: After killing Orochi, Susanoo discovered the sword Ame-no-Murakumo (also known as the Sword of Kusanagi) within its body, one of the most famous artifacts of Japan which would later become one of the three pieces of the Imperial Reglia.
5. ↑ **Siegfried and Fafnir**: Siegfried of the German epic Nibelungenlied (and also known as Sigurd in Norse mythology) slayed the dragon Fafnir, before he bathed in its blood which made his body invulnerable. However, a leaf was stuck on his back as he bathed where the blood did not touch, and this vulnerable spot later caused his death.

6. ↑ **Lancelot and the Sword**: As a baby, Sir Lancelot was carried off by the Lady of the Lake who raised him in the faerie realms. The Lady of the Lake was also renowned as the one who presented Arthur with Excalibur, although in some earlier Arthurian stories Lancelot was the one who received the famous sword instead.
7. ↑ 天: google the phrase if you're curious.
8. ↑ Literal translation, I believe Lucretia is referring how Godou is fishing for more girls with the girls he already has on hand (to be honest I have no idea).
9. ↑ Reference to Genji from the Genji Monogatari. There's a manga called Minamoto-kun Monogatari which is also based on that.
10. ↑ The kanji used here is 髯, which could mean moustache, beard or whiskers. In this case it probably means beard, I don't recall pirates having moustaches or whiskers.
11. ↑ Reference to 'お' (Osha Majo Doremi, or Magical Doremi).
12. ↑ Christianity.
13. ↑ Mineuchi refers to striking with the back of the blade
14. ↑ A reference to Walpurgisnacht (Like Madoka)
15. ↑ A second as in a duel, the person who takes over once the first guy loses.
16. ↑ A nickname, it's written in katakana
17. ↑ The exact lines here were 見 &
18. ↑ She says this in a hurry.
19. ↑ Loli without saying loli.
20. ↑ A flashback
21. ↑ He's singing ['O sole mio], a Neapolitan song written in 1898

22. ↑ The katakana used is 'episode'. It sounds weird, but I can't bring myself to change it.
23. ↑ This is an sfx that expresses the tightening of one's chest.
24. ↑ Karen's exact words are 'か', which I can't find a proper replacement for in English. The former means 'Understood' in a very formal manner, and the latter is a greeting when you are seeing someone off.
25. ↑ This is a really difficult paragraph. Almost all of the phrases she used is pretty much descriptive/definitive of a married couple - the birds flying wing to wing, the entwined branches of the same tree. Oshidori - 鴛 is a mandarin duck, and at the end she used , which is the oshidori's pledge - which refers to the closeness and good relations between a married couple (or something like that).
26. ↑ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zoroastrianism
27. ↑ These refer to two different beings. The Emperor Elagabalus, also known as Heliogabalus, and the sun god Heliogabalus, also known as Elagabalus. They have the same name.
28. ↑ Jesus
29. ↑ A Greek martial art.
30. ↑ Weapons clashing sfx.